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VOL. 2813.

A FELLOWE AND HIS WIFE.

BY

BLANCHE WILLIS HOWARD AND W. SHARP.

IN ONE VOLUME.

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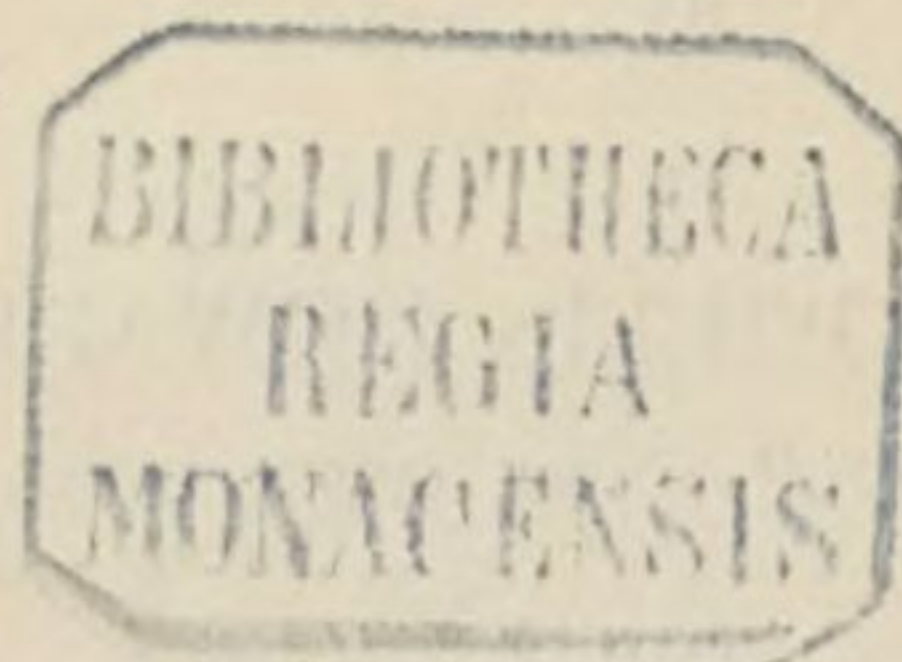
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WILLIAM SHARP.

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LEIPZIG
BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1892.



“A fellowe almost damned in a faire wife.”—OTHELLO.

COUNT VON JAROMAR: BLANCHE WILLIS HOWARD.

COUNTESS VON JAROMAR: WILLIAM SHARP.

A FELLOWE AND HIS WIFE.

I.

*From the Countess Ilse von Jaromar-Ilsenstein to
her husband, Count Odo von Jaromar.*

PALAZZO MALASPINA,

VIA GREGORIANA, ROME.

Thursday, 27th October.

AMICO MIO—

You see how Italian I am already! You will note at a glance that I am no longer at the Hotel d'Italia. A most fortunate thing has happened. You will remember how pleased I was when our good neighbour, Count Paul Waldeck, promised me an introduction to Friedrich Herwegh,

the sculptor. Well, I had not presented the letter, but when dining two nights ago with our friends Ulrich Heideloff and his wife, I met Herwegh. He is a splendid fellow. One is nearly always disappointed in expectations of famous people, but our great sculptor is an exception. True, he is younger, in aspect at any rate, than I had anticipated; but as for that, well, so much the better. The Heideloffs quite embarrassed me by all the kind things they said, but I was well aware that Herwegh was nothing more than courteously interested, till Lotta led him to the corner of the *salon* where my little ivory "Diver" stands, in what I told my amiable hosts is the most charming and flattering isolation. You know the one I mean? Not the "Diver" I sent to Berlin, but that which I made last summer at Thiessow, from Caspar Mohl, the son of the old boatman who used to take us about so much. It is the one which stoops forward, looking intently into imaginary depths. Herwegh gave a

rapid glance, first at it, then at me. But he kept silent so long that my heart sank. Ah, my dear Odo, it throbbed quickly enough when he turned to me and said: "You did this?" and added, "So, you are a sculptor indeed. That 'Diver' is not flawless, but there is nothing amateurish about it. You must work, work, work; study, study, study. Do you know that there is not a woman—well, never mind. And now, Countess, when will you come and have a talk with me? Will you come to my studio to-morrow?"

Of course I gladly agreed. On the morrow I went to his workroom in the Vicolo da Tolentino, close to the Piazza del Tritone, which you will remember. By the way, I *am* so glad you visited Rome after you left the university, for I need not bore you with descriptions and raptures and reflections; and yet when I *do* wish you to have some definite idea, it is delightful to know that, from a hint or two, you can realize what is before me as I write. And again, as I am much more

interesting to you than Herwegh's sculpture.—if I thought you would smile at this I should never forgive you!—I won't say anything about it at present. Only, I was glad to be there—to be with that great artist—to see his newly-begun and partly-finished works, with the rigorous, animating master-touch manifest everywhere. He invited me to be quite frank with him. You, who complain that I am so uncommunicative, would be surprised to hear me. I told him all—well, all that was needful. And, what do you think?—oh, I am so glad! He knew just the place for me to go to. He has friends, Gustav and Lilien Röhrich, who own the whole of the third *étage* of the Palazzo Malaspina. They are wealthy people, and are much away from Rome; but he assured me there would be no difficulty in my having a small suite of rooms there. The Röhrichs had offered this suite to him, but he preferred to be nearer his studio. He would, he said, go round to the Palazzo Malaspina and see them at once on my

behalf. Before I clearly understood, he was gone! I confess I was much perturbed till he returned. I did not know what to think. Moreover, I did not for a moment believe he would be successful in his quest; but the moment I saw his face I guessed my good fortune; and, indeed, I had not long to wait, for with him came Frau Röhrich, a pleasant and comely woman. Well, to be brief, I went back with her, saw the rooms, came to an arrangement, and thanked my guardian gods! The rooms are small, but their situation is all one could wish. The Palazzo Malaspina is an old palace nearly at the Pincian end of the Via Sistina; and it has two entrances, one in that street, and one in the Via Gregoriana. *My* rooms are gained by the latter, though the main entrance is in the Sistina. It is just the place for a romance; the daring lover can come in one way and go by another! Ah, but I am looked after by these good Röhrichs, so set your mind at rest! You must remember that saying in

your favourite Balzac: "What saves the virtue of many a woman is that protecting god—*the impossible*." What a cynic! But you men are all alike. Well, I am to have three charming little rooms—a bedroom, a reception-room, and a small room which is to serve as my studio, with attendance, for 250 lire a month: a small sum, when one considers the advantages, the position, and so forth. They all face north-westerly, so you may imagine my view! I look right over Rome, and out upon the Ostian Campagna. To the right lies the Papal part of the city, and I can just catch the fringe of the gardens of the Pincio. I know you don't think much of King Umberto's Prime Minister, so you will be glad to hear that I too look down upon him—literally, for I overlook his house in the Via Gregoriana. But, to make good news better, Frau Röhrich told me I could get in at once. It is so good of them and Friedrich Herwegh. I can see that the 250 lire is only a nominal charge, as they knew I could

not come save as a paying tenant; had they really wished to gain by letting the rooms they would have charged at least 700 lire. Herwegh told me that his English friends, the Arnolds, pay 1000 lire for an indifferent apartment in this expensive Via Gregoriana.

Eccomi! Here I am, happily situated. I cannot tell you how elated I am at the prospects of this coming winter. I am going to work so hard. You will be proud of me yet, Odo.

By the way, this will amuse you. Some one on the staff of the *Fanfulla* took me for the wife of the new Russian Ambassador: "Madame Olgaroff is a tall and handsome woman, with that singular fairness which is essentially Scandinavian rather than Slavonic. She is quite young, certainly well on the right side of five and twenty. The unusual dark blue of her eyes is in striking contrast to her pure skin and lustrous bronze-gold hair. Madame Olgaroff was the most noticed person at the Reception, and both King Umberto

and Queen Margherita were clearly impressed by her stately beauty of face and figure and her winsome manner. The Russian Ambadress was dressed"—but, no, my poor Odo, I won't inflict you to *that* point.

You know that I am vain, though of course you will deny having ever told me so. Still, I do not think, till I came to the description of the dress, that I would have guessed I was meant, though of course I knew some ridiculous mistake had been made. That time I stayed with your aunt in Berlin I met Madame Olgaroff, a commonplace, dowdy woman, and without a single recommendation save her high birth and immense wealth. And now in to-day's *Fanfulla* there is a correction to the effect that Madame Olgaroff was not yet in Rome, and that the lady who had been inadvertently described instead is that *illustrissima signora la Contessa Ilse von Ilsenstein-Jaromar*.

Thursday evening.

The Röhrichs very kindly insisted on taking me for a drive to the Villa Pamphilj-Doria to-day. I am astonished to find my childish recollections of Rome so little subject to change. As we crossed the Corso and drove past the column of Marcus Aurelius, and down through the narrow streets to the Tiber, I found that there was almost nothing that was new to me! True, I had never before seen the beautiful gardens of the Pamphilj-Doria—alone worth coming to Rome to see, says Herwegh, and I agree with him—but I had been on the Janiculum before, and well remembered the luxurious splashing of the water in the great fountains of the Acqua Paola, and that superb and unrivalled view from the terrace of the Spanish Academy across Rome to the Sabines and Albans. Do you know I had such a strange *Heimweh* all at once, when at the Villa. We had alighted to walk about a little. I forget if you know the place; if you do, you will remember the

narrow *lago*. I was strolling near it, and suddenly I came upon that small amber-yellow flower—I don't know its name—which grows in our north-sea islands. That day at Vilm—you know the day, dear—you gave me one, and said it should be called the Ilse-flower, because it was never the same long—constantly lighter or darker, but never the same. It all came back to me—you, and the island-forest, and all the dear homeland.

You told me once that I had not a spark of sentiment in me. You foolish boy!

Friday morning.

I fell into a dream last night, and so did not finish, and therefore did not post my letter. I am not going to tell you what my dream was, for to-day there is no letter from you, as I expected. I wonder—ah, here it comes! Of course: how stupid I am! It went first to the Hotel d'Italia.

Well, I have read your letter. It is not quite like you, Odo. Why, I cannot say. It seems constrained, and so unlike that which I found

awaiting me at Milan, and that at the Italia. What tiresome things letters are! they are either flowers without their wildwood fragrance, or little adders, all wriggle and sting! No, I am not going to write to you any more just now. Why do you lay so much stress upon "duty?"—"your duty," "my duty." The word is your Shibboleth just now. And I hate Shibboleths—and that quotation from Herder! It is excellent, but to what is it à propos? I was reading a French book in the train the other day, and there was a much more apt remark about duty there. "There is a magic in the word duty, something I know not what, which sustains magistrates, inflames warriors, and cools married people!" There, I have given you my Dupuy for your Herder. Think over it, *sposo mio!*

If you are good—but not otherwise—you shall hear again from your

Ever affectionate and dutiful

ILSE.

II.

From the Count to the Countess von Jaromar.

SCHLOSS JAROMAR, RÜGEN,

November 3.

Your letter from the Palazzo Malaspina, my Ilse, scarcely reached our northern shores before meeting with strange adventures on land and sea. Among its rude experiences, it has taken an involuntary and prolonged cold bath . . . and by the four heads of the great god Swantevit, it needed no reduction of temperature!

Poor little letter! It is blotted and blurred as if by tears, a sorry plight for so light-hearted a thing. I have spread it out here before the fire, and smoothed it as well as I could, but its backbone is broken, and much of it is illegible; that bit of Balzac in one of his aberrations of intellect for instance, and the close, with its undertone. Why were you restive, Ilschen? What can I have said? Do I not know well that there is no conflict between your soul and mine as to

what duty means, however we may differ in non-essentials, and if, where you lie prostrate before the shrine of art, I stand erect—as a free man should. So I do not mourn that I have unwittingly drowned Dupuy with his trite matrimonial saw which, you must concede, applied to so unique a young couple is ludicrously wide of the mark. Surely you have effectually guarded us from the insidious perils of proximity, and since whatever infelicities we may call our own, we are spared for the present the traditional dullness of daily intercourse, we ought by good rights to escape a lot of conventional rubbish, the advice and warnings of elderly prigs and all threadbare epigrams on wedlock. Deign to leave me this compensation. The wise man, you remember, is thankful that “thorns have roses.”

But how your letter got its extra chill? In a man's breast pocket—in a lifeboat—in a storm. We were all drenched to the skin, but the poor child's long wet hair is, I think, what did the

mischief, when I slipped my coat under her head on the sand. Captain Albrecht of the *Nautilus*, bound for Copenhagen, ran his ship on the Witch's Tooth, at nine o'clock, All Saints' Eve—how, God knows, for the man does not drink a drop, and is as familiar with these waters as I with my own woods. It is one of those ghastly things that happens now and then to men responsible for human lives, and makes them curse the day they were born and believe in the direct interposition of Satan. Albrecht has been here, helpless, broken, fairly writhing in agony, but what can I do? Five corpses lay on the shore—the price of a moment's inattention, of a lifetime's trained, tense vigilance relaxed by a hair's breadth—one tardy vibration in his mental machinery, or ill-luck—call it what you will. They've cashiered him, of course. There's absolutely nothing else to do, but it's hard lines all the same, and I never again want to see a fine grayhaired fellow of fifty-seven sobbing like

a woman in my study. His horror and remorse at the thought of the dead move him more than his own disgrace. Poor devil! I confess as I looked at him and his stranded prospects, it seemed to me, for a moment, that the kindest thing I could do would be to offer him my revolver and a quiet nook in the park. But he has a wife and young children. She is good, I am told, and brave. I hope, with her, there may be a chance for him yet. But for such misery there is no help on earth except from a loving woman. (You see, Ilse, we men are cynics not so much in our hearts as in our epigrams.) I have advised him to leave the country at once, and shall run over to Stralsund to look after them a little, after his wife knows all.

You should have seen our fishermen turn out that night. You know that when the Kruse brothers and cousins move in any course they are as one tranquil spirit, and if they are but getting in their rye and barley it is a pleasure to

watch them. But when with their quiet eyes and the gentle inflexibility of their mouths they face danger, they are superb. It was good to see the slumbering giant in them wake. It seemed impossible to launch the boats. We were lashed back again and again. Holzer jammed his right arm against the pier, so I slipped in at the last moment in his place. Luckily the steamer was near the shore, for it was altogether the toughest pull we ever had here, in the teeth of one of our stiff north-east gales.

Of sixty passengers, ten are unrecovered; we've buried five by the chapel on the hill; the others, warmed and fed, have gone their way, except the girl—Margot is her name—who at this moment is presumably continuing to do what she has done for three days, that is, lie on her back and stare at the ceiling with the largest, most touching eyes I ever saw. Her father and mother are drowned. We thought she was, and

it's a pity she's not, poor little pale waif. Walpurga has put her in the tower-room, because it gets the sun on all sides. The child does not moan, or shed a tear, or speak, only looks unutterably forlorn and still. It is quite uncanny. If she'd wail and tear her hair, I should be greatly relieved, but this amount of repressed sorrow in a mere child—she looks about fifteen—is appalling. When I ask her if she's not feeling better, she answers, "Yes, thanks," in a weary little voice, and I haven't the heart to "rouse" her, as the doctor says, and make her talk. She does not care a straw where she is or what is to become of her. She only knows that she has lost her father, her mother, and her home. For my part, I intend to respect her silence and her grief. Child as she is, nobody shall intrude upon her sorrow in my house. She shall lie there and stare as long as she likes. Happily, the servants cannot annoy her, for she speaks only French. Her father was a German,

Ernst Borike—we found cards in his pocket-book—who apparently had lived in France and married a Frenchwoman. But there will be time enough later to learn little Margot's story, and where her relatives are, and to whom I must send her, after she comes back to earth.

You will admit, Ilse, that a few things have happened; we have not been quite tame since you left us. The whole Jaromar clan, Schloss and village, have worked manfully, and old Malte and I have had our hands full enough, for some of the shipwrecked people lost their money and clothing, and some their wits—less easy to supply. From the high palace windows where my lady leans gazing across Rome upon the Campagna—that far-off seeking look in her eyes, and the corners of her mouth tipped up adorably—and disdains Prime Ministers and all humdrum things, let no lofty commiseration descend upon her forsaken island home. We do not deserve it, at least not yet. For had you seen the struggle,

the still, dogged courage of our men, the dead on the beach, the desolate eyes of the orphan, and an honest man in disgrace so hopeless that death would be a boon to him, your heart would have throbbed almost as fast, perhaps, as when the sculptor-fellow praised your Diver. Don't frown, Ilse. It is indeed a pretty toy. I like the little beggar more, it may be, than you suspect. Yet there are better things. It is not all of life.

But this draws me temptingly near our old battle-ground, and you have most astutely bound me over to keep the peace, so far at least as the quarrelsome propensities of a notoriously turbulent race will permit. And for how long? That you forgot to stipulate, wise as you are. Till Christmas, say? Before the old year dies, it is fitting that a man speak his mind to himself, his neighbour, the stranger within his gates, and the wife—in Rome.

As for the turbulent race—what evil-tempered rascals they were, my high-nosed ancestors! How

horribly afraid of them I used to be when I was little, and Malte used to prime me with blood-curdling tales of family murders and phantoms, as conscientiously as he taught me to ride and shoot. Since then my pedigree, considering that there is more than a thousand mouldy years of it, has certainly been a vastly light weight on my mind. To-day, however, I am led to reflect upon the moody, scowling row in the gallery, because I have to pass them on my occasional journeys to and from the tower.

A pretty bad lot they must have been, every man of them gnawing his nether lip like Mephisto himself. If I gnaw mine less, it is no doubt due to the influences of a certain sunny but thorough-going tyranny to which I have been subjected as boy and man.

Perhaps, indeed, the old bandits are gnawing specially and offensively at me just now. They prefer feudal, not to say savage, matrimonial methods. They knew enough to seize

the woman they wanted, lock her in a stout castle, and make mince-meat of any man that approached. Naturally they disapprove of me, and there come moments when I disapprove of myself, and long, with a kind of Berserker rage, to revert to their uncompromising fashions. This, no doubt, is atavism. It passes, and I am again the modern man—Odo, your old playmate and life-long friend. Calling myself your husband is but a farce, which I play awkwardly enough. But your friend, that I am, first, last, always; and your lover, when you will. Never believe me patient, yet never for an instant lose your trust in me. You are free as air until you voluntarily lay your hands in mine. Let the world wonder. You and I know what path we have chosen, and why. We are accountable only to ourselves. You shall have your free flight. Never mind my grumbling. What whim of yours did I ever fail to aid? Not that this is a whim, dear. The word is ill-chosen. Forgive it.

You will not now call me constrained. It was this, unspoken, which you felt between the lines of my last letter. An idle jest opened the way to-day, yet it is well, for we had little time together at the last; and there are things one cannot say between the oysters and salad, and a fringe of solicitous aunts—and the thought of your absence lay like lead on my heart. In books, parting friends are eloquent; in life, they can find but commonplace, insignificant words. At all events, I stared, stammered—and you were gone.

I am glad, too, that I can follow your course, tread Roman streets and see Roman sights with you. I wish you your heart's desire. Kind messages to friends who are kind to you. I thought you intended to avoid general society, and already you figure in the personal column of the *Fanfulla*? Not that it matters much. Those newspaper cads clutch all things in heaven and earth nowadays.

Lebe wohl! In your poor little mangled, desecrated letter a good angel has kept one precious place clear and unharmed for me—your remembrance of our day together in the Vilm forest. I have kissed it many times. I kiss and bless the hand that wrote it.

ODO.

III.

From the Countess to Count von Jaromar.

PALAZZO MALASPINA, ROME,
12th November.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—

Your letter, so like yourself, has touched me deeply. Never for an instant believe that I can be forgetful of or indifferent to our dear Jaromar and all its associations. But I wonder if you will understand me when I say that, at the moment—is it mood? is it some subtle change that comes *with* change?—I am not so much an alien in a foreign land as—how shall I say it?—the

recipient of a welcome letter coming to me from a strange country. Now that I have written it, my thought or fancy seems crude, *banale* almost. But perhaps you will understand; I hope so. Yesterday I was modelling my "Undine," and I cannot tell you what keen and strange delight the conscious shaping of my ductile material gave me, the mere manipulation of it, even, I am tempted to say. I felt as though a year had passed since I had *done* anything. Yesterday Friedrich Herwegh called upon me, and I remember one thing that he uttered, with that enigmatic turn which I recognize as characteristic of him. "There is no geography in art, and yet perhaps the south must ever hold herself aloof from the north." "And then?" I rejoined, half laughingly, glancing at him in a surprise by no means feigned. But he only looked at me gravely, then at my little clay model. "Speak to me about your north," he exclaimed suddenly, and with equal abruptness offered me a chair,

and made ready to seat himself near. What a strange man he is. He interests me deeply. I like a man to bear the insignia of his race. And yet, strangely enough, I am the more drawn to Herwegh from the fact that he is not unmistakably a German. He might belong to almost any European nation, and he might readily be taken for an American. He has that rapid adaptability which enables him to be of the nation of whatever sympathetic companion he may be with. In appearance he is a *dark* Scandinavian, as tall and athletic almost as you, my dear Odo, and perhaps of a paler complexion than the true northerner generally is. Thus it is, combined with his rare linguistic fluency, that he is by turns a Prussian or a South German, an Italian or a Spaniard, a Slav or a Briton, a Frenchman or an American. In a word, he is a typical cosmopolitan. I fear I must seem very parochial to him. And yet—but enough of Signor Herwegh, I want to speak to you about myself. How

happy I am here! I have often heard people say that Rome is a depressing place to dwell in. It may be so, but to me it is a stimulus as well as a delight. I could be quite content here if I did not know a soul. I smiled when I read those words in your letter about my intention to avoid general society; *of course* it is my intention to do so. But you men are so funny; if you say that you are not going to gamble, you will not even *look* at the coins in your pocket. Now, I have less than ever the intention to gamble, but I was dull, in a natural reaction after my travelling and excitement, and when the opportunity suddenly came in my way, I rose to it as suddenly as the salmon to the unexpected and tantalizing fly. People talk of Latin taste, and even these dear ignorant Italians repeat the favourite catchword of Paris; but I assure you that I never before saw so many ill-dressed women. There was one Roman *principessa* clad in staring blue silk all figured over with virulently scarlet pop-

pies—oh, no, I cannot even recall her without a shudder.

No, I am living so quietly that the Röhrichs smilingly affirm that I shall be known as a second Hilda. Do you know that *Transformation* was one of the books—Anderson's *Improvisatore* was the other—that used, in my girlhood, literally to *fever* me with a longing for Rome and Italy? How strange that it was *you* who lent me these books: the first in translation, for I did not then know English. And yet, why strange? Do you puzzle yourself like this sometimes, Odo? I do, often; about you, sometimes; about myself, frequently. This duality is so bewildering. I to be myself, whom *you* know, and whom *I* know—and then that other I, whom you do not know at all, and whom I only catch glimpses of as in a mirror, or hear whispering for a moment in the twilight.

Hilda? No, I am not a Hilda, though I seem to know her intimately. How delightful it will

be, some day in the hot summertide, when we are too idle to read and too light-hearted to dream, to carry on for ourselves the lives of some of those men and women of fiction in whom we have been profoundly interested. Can you tell me Hilda's secret story? What will you give me if I relate to you a new version of the latter days of Helen of Troy? Would you be interested to learn the inner life of Petrarch's Laura, of Michel Angelo's Vittoria? Is there another side to the story of Andrea del Sarto and his Lucrezia? Can you tell me the thoughts of Barbarossa as he grew his red beard, or the dreams of Theodoric the Goth while he looked out upon the South from his villa by the Latin sea? Would you like to see what Lili—no, what Charlotte von Stein chanced to be writing in her sentimental journal on that evening when, after three sleepless nights in consequence of Zimmermann's description of her, Goethe wrote below her portrait: "What a glorious poem it would be to see how the world

mirrors itself in this soul!" If you will tell me the rare imagings of George Sand when Chopin played to her in the gloaming, I will perplex you with the strange thoughts of Emilia Viviani after the English poet left her and wrote his marvellous "Epipsychidion." But we must distinguish; we will not waste our time with commonplace or vulgar personages. We have too many acquaintances of the kind about us always! No, I would give my "Diver" for a fantastic history of Heine's Sefchen or for the diary of Gaspara Stampa—that "Saffo di nostro tempo"—but I would not thank you for all the secrets of Byron's famous lady-love, La Guiccioli. Ah! what a wonderful poem, the "Epipsychidion." I am glad that I know English, if only to read it. In these last days I have heard much of this author, Shelley: that he was a strange man, and died young. His ashes are buried in the beautiful old God's-acre here, close to the Pyramid of Caius Cestius. Another beloved young English poet,

whose writings I do not know, is buried close by. Some day we must read together the finest things of Shelley, and this poor young Keats. A year or two ago, I remember, I read something by the former; a long poem which I did not understand aright, and so did not care for. But two nights ago, at the Heideloffs', there was an Englishman, a writer (I did not catch his name), and Herwegh, who was there also, said something about Shelley's grave, and this led on to his admission that a rich American had commissioned him to make a life-size statue of Shelley. This induced an animated discussion, and, somewhat to my surprise, I found that Herwegh is an enthusiastic admirer of this English poet—and, indeed, is a student and lover of all English poets. You will understand, therefore, with what pleasure I promised to avail myself of his generous offer to discuss and read to me on this subject. He talks as well as knows English so thoroughly, that the Heideloffs' English guest evidently took him to be

a compatriot. This is a splendid opportunity for me, as you are aware how anxious I am to know intimately the language and literature of this people, whom, in common with yourself, I at once like and dislike, admire and feel unattracted by. I am paradoxical, you see. Herwegh says that a woman utters paradoxes by the grace of God, and a man only from *maladroit* wit. When he came to see me yesterday, I asked him about the poem "Epipsychidion," which he had so enthusiastically praised. He at once recited it to me. I cannot tell you how deeply I was impressed. Shelley must have been half a woman. I have been in a kind of dream ever since. After we returned from the old Protestant cemetery—did I tell you that Herwegh kindly drove me thither yesterday to see the graves of Shelley and Keats, and others of all nations at rest there in that beautiful spot?—I sat for a long time through the late afternoon, dreaming that I was Emilia Viviani. I sat at the open window beside the

little balcony outside my room. A rare pink flush lay over Rome. Beyond the Vatican the wind played in the sky with fugitive wisps of vapour; long streaks, invisibly beginning and invisibly vanishing, and only midway fringed like floating seaweed or spraying upward like thin snow before a skater's feet. A little later the flush became amethyst. Suddenly a score or more of white pigeons flew upwards from the fountain in the Piazza di Spagna, and circled round and round before me, the upper wings of this bird-cloud touched with gleams of purple or gold. They rose and sank and rose again. Strange how such a thing should fascinate one so profoundly. I watched them entranced. Suddenly they rose, wheeled, and then, like one broad white pinion, swayed in a long slope, out of sight, westward. The beautiful flush over Rome was now almost a wine-dark purple. Though the day was not gone, I could see a star in the heart of the purple, wavering like a white light at a far-off

casement. And still I was Emilia Viviani. Do not think me foolish, Odo. I could not stay in my room any more, so I went out, up the Via Sistina, to Santa Trinità dei Monti, to hear the nuns singing *Ave Maria*. It did me good—*every way*. There was one of the good sisters who had a voice in which lived the inmost spirit of her life, a lost, thwarted, loving, utterly desolate life. I caught a glimpse of her. She was young and beautiful—or had been. When I stepped on to the terrace, which commands so superb a view of Rome, I met Herwegh. He, too, must have been in Santa Trinità, and must have seen my nun. He bowed gravely, and passed on, but as he did so he remarked, "Yet, we are told, youth is a continual intoxication."

I don't know how it is that I am often so struck by what Herwegh says. It is not always his words, nor their epigrammatic phrasing: neither is it his manner. I find myself very much in sympathy with him. However, I suppose I'll

see little of this *illustrissimo scultore* henceforth. He is a very busy man, and, I understand, also goes out into society a good deal. I am at once glad and sorry. But, after all, the more isolation I live in, meanwhile, the better for me and my aim in art. By the way, what do you think was the effect on me of yesterday afternoon, and (perhaps) of the nun's singing? I put aside my Undine, and am thinking over an ideal bust *in poco* of Emilia Viviani. This dead woman, whom I know of only through an English poet's rhapsody, has taken strange hold upon my imagination. For some inscrutable reason—some ridiculous whim, might be truer—I have conceived a dislike of her, even while she attracts me. But enough; I shall tire you.

My dear Odo, this is already a long letter, and yet I have taken almost no notice of the strange episode you narrate in yours. Do not, *please*, think me unfeeling or indifferent. Believe me, I have thought often and much of what you

wrote, and of all concerned, of the poor drowned people, and of those who wait afar off hoping for their return, of those whom you have succoured, and of poor Captain Albrecht, for whom I am sorrowful indeed; and, above all, of your brave dear self. Little did I think that my poor little letter was to be so sore beset. I hope this next northward swallow will be a more fortunate as well as a more welcome harbinger. Are you susceptible to those subtle influences which, in absence, are like spirits which wind an invisible veil around our memories, and swathe in some "fibre of oblivion" certain keys in the instrument of our life, and even misssuade as by illusory lights and shadows which we unwittingly take to be our own thoughts, fancies, impulses? Or, I wonder, are men and women *really* different *au fond*? I heard that foreigner at the Heideloffs' the other night say that Newton had discovered the law of gravitation, that Darwin had demonstrated the secret of evolution, that Leeuen-

hoek had determined the pulse of an insect and the constitution of a germ, and that very soon we would be as familiar with the life of Mars as with the origin of coal; but where was the man who had really explored the inmost recesses of a woman's heart, or observed the hidden sources of those fugitive motives which differentiate her from the male of her species? We all laughed, but no one answered. After a little, Herwegh made the only trite remark I have ever heard him utter: "We have all heard much about the laying bare of the secret of 'Darkest Africa,' but a greater than a whole army of explorers will be the 'Stanley of Womanhood.'" It was somewhat commonplace after the other, but it made us smile again, and lifted us into a blither current of conversation. Still, I am puzzled. I wonder if you could help me, Odo. A great many things have been passing through my mind recently. For one thing, I am disquieted on a certain point concerning which I promised you to be silent.

But I must ask you to absolve me. I think you will guess what I mean. O Odo, I *do* wish to support myself, to *be* myself, to feel that I, a woman, am not a mere appendage. Do not mistake me, I pray you. I am not fretting at being so deeply indebted to you. I would fain hope myself free of the pettiness of conceiving your generous love as a bondage, however kindly veiled. It is not that I, Ilse Jaromar, wish to be free of monetary indebtedness to you, my husband; but that I, Ilse Ilsenstein, feel that I can neither be the artist I aspire to become, nor the woman I would fain be, if, voluntarily or involuntarily, I follow in the footsteps of another. My friend, is it not better so? Perhaps we do, deep down, regard life from a different standpoint. It may be. I do not even venture to say that I regret it, if so it be. Regrets are useless in the face of facts. One thinks of the nonagenarian sage who spent the seventy mature years of his life in regretting the inevitableness of his death,

and died at last with only a single emotion left—regret that he had regretted. Honestly, my friend, I am in great perplexity. I have pondered my affairs closely. You know that my aunt, Hedwig von Eulenburg, left me a legacy of a few thousand marks, to be paid to me on my wedding. Now, I have deducted all the marriage expenses in which I, personally, was involved, and those incurred here in Rome and *en route*. I find that, allowing for my indebtedness to the Röhrichs and for living and working expenses, I shall still have, at the beginning of the new year, which is already drawing in upon us, no less a sum than an amount well on the right side of five thousand marks. Now, I would rather expend this little capital in the way that seems to me most to my own good; and, to this end, I ask your help. I should add that I can hardly fail to make at least a *living* with my chisel. Herwegh assures me that, in this respect, the way is clear before me. Now, Odo, will you let me

repay the money you have so generously advanced? Nay, dear friend, I must not word my wish so, in justice to myself as well as to you: I *must* repay it. If you cannot, or will not, meet me, then at least will you take this money that I enclose, and put it at Frau Albrecht's disposal? It will help her to live over a bitter time. And you, *sposo mio*, will understand me in this? I am not cutting myself off from you, Odo; but as a woman, as well as an artist, I wish to stand *alone* for a time. To a proud woman—and I need not tell you that I am proud—this occasional isolation is as necessary as solitude to the student. I cannot explain more just now. But do you so far understand? Will you respect my wish? Bah! how foolish of me; there is a caller, and here I am with flushed face and tremulous pulse.

[Later.]

It was only Friedrich Herwegh. I must hurriedly finish this letter. He and the Heideloffs

are going this evening to the German Ambassador's—"an informal coffee," Herwegh calls it—and I am going with them. Only a few friends are to be there; no "dressing" I am glad to say. What do you think my wicked sculptor said? He had jocularly asked me if I were writing a romance. "Yes," I replied, "I have been writing about a woman's inner life." He smiled. I did not like it. I added, "and I was writing about a woman's power of holding her true self inviolate." "At Waterloo," he said, with quiet sarcasm, "General Cambronne remarked, 'The French Guard dies, but does not surrender.' Now, wherein women differ from the French Guard is, that they surrender but do not die." I stared haughtily, and plainly showed my resentment, but, with a mocking smile, he bowed and was gone.

Well, *lebe wohl*, my dear friend, I shall post this to-night, but I shall write soon again.

Hurriedly but affectionately yours,

ILSE.

P.S.—That poor little Margot. I am so sorry for her. I hope you will soon be able to send her back to her people; for her own sake she ought not to be kept long among foreigners, however kind. Poor child! Tell me, is she dark or fair? and how old is she? and—but I must go. Addio!

IV.

From the same to the same.

PALAZZO MALASPINA,

November 13.

MY DEAR ODO,—

I had the most delightful evening. The informal gathering at our Ambassador's was really a family affair. I did not know that Lotta Heideloff was his cousin; as for Herwegh, though no relation, he had a right there as an old and intimate friend. For myself, I felt *de trop*. To my delight, I managed to slip away after a little, unobserved of my friend. I took a vettura and

drove to the Pincio. Oh, the sweet autumnal air! I stood for some time watching Rome in its afternoon glow. Trastevere gleamed like an onyx. Along the broad avenue below me, leading circuitously down to the Piazza del Popolo, a score of the young priests of the German College, clad in their brilliant scarlet robes, went by. Above a house in or near the Via Ripetta a tall, gilt Mercury rose, blazing with sunfire, out of a mass of velvety-looking shadow. But I cannot tell you all I noticed, all that impressed me. Besides, descriptions are even more uninteresting than haphazard daubings on a palette. Then I walked along the west walk by the huge walls that overlook the Borghese grounds. What a place for a tragic encounter, that gloomy Via delle Mura, which, like a ravine, divides Prince Borghese's park from the gardens of the Pincio. There was a rustle among the pines that made my northern heart suddenly ache. A redbreast, whom some poet has aptly called "the yellow

autumn's nightingale," sang a poignantly sweet snatch of song from the heart of a spurge-laurel. A silent thrush stirred restlessly in the heart of a dense mass of ilex. The silence was that creative peace wherein the soul takes courage and inhales new life. I was, half unconsciously, brooding over my Emilia Viviani, when of a sudden a clamorous fanfare of trumpets aroused me unpleasantly. As I did not wish to be entertained in that fashion at the moment, I walked swiftly across the gardens. As I left the gate, and stood for a few seconds (as I do every time I pass) at the beautiful wide fountain under the ilexes opposite the French Academy, I was accosted by Friedrich Herwegh. He walked home with me, and just as we reached my Palazzo (observe my calm possessive case!), we met Lilien Röhrich. She said she had been hunting for me, and made me promise to come in during the evening. I had to agree that I would sing also. "I am depending upon you and Herr Herwegh,"

she added, wickedly. I did not know he sang. It appears he is well known socially for his fine voice. He told me he would sing a little English song that he felt sure I would like.

And it was in truth, as I have said, a delightful evening. I met some pleasant people, and I was gratified by the wife of the Austrian Ambassador, who has bought the palace of the ruined Prince Annibale Vescovi, telling me that her husband was so delighted with my little ivory "Diver," that he would not be content till he had one or two rivals from my chisel. There, you see, Herwegh was right.

I sang two German songs, and then a French one, which I have never sung to you; at least, I think not. The words are by De Musset, and begin—

"Quand on perd
Par triste occurrence
Son espérance
Et sa gaieté,

Le remède
Au mélancolique
C'est la musique
Et la beauté."

I was paid such a charming compliment *à propos* to the two closing lines.

Then Herwegh sang. Both his voice and the song itself affected me strangely. I understand it is by an—a young Jewess. He sings well; not, perhaps, so masterfully as I had expected, but with a certain thrilling lilt which is irresistible. I can remember only the first stanza; perhaps, indeed, it is the whole poem. Now that I think of it, I fancy it is—

"What does youth know of love?

Little enough, I trow!

He plucks the myrtle for his brow,

For his forehead the rose.

Nay, but of love

It is not youth who knows."

Is that not fine? but you should hear it wedded to apt music, and then sung by Friedrich Herwegh.

I was introduced to two Italians. Herwegh seems to know them intimately. Lucrezia Malerini is a beautiful woman. She is a Southerner of Southerners in type. Herwegh called her a Græco-Romano-Etrurian type, which is somewhat too complex for me. She gave me quite an unpleasant sensation; and why? Do not laugh; 'twas her resemblance to my imaginary Emilia Viviani! She was very courteous in her chill Roman way. Yet I fancy—nay, I am sure—she does not take to me. She is, I think, a little too conscious of her beauty. Still less did I like her husband, Cesare. He is tall, dark, with a forbidding smile continually on his lips. She would do for a Delilah, he for a—for a—well, I don't know whom. It does not matter. I dare say they will improve upon acquaintanceship, for I am to see something of them, I suppose. They know the Röhrichs fairly well, and Herwegh almost intimately. I cannot imagine him being so enthusiastic as he professes about *la bella Lucrezia*.

I was at his studio to-day; and I looked to see if he had utilized her type in his sculptures. He had not. This puzzles me. Alas! if I do not stop, the German post will go without my letter. Addio, dear Odo.

Yours affectionately,

ILSE.

P.S.—Tell me about “Margot.”

V.

From the Count to the Countess von Jaromar.

SCHLOSS JAROMAR,

November 16.

Our Wild Horseman is, I am convinced, a greatly maligned spectre. He has committed no hideous crime; he is not doomed, in expiation for nameless sins, to dash frantically across country all night long, scaring beldames by the Lohme bog, nearly knocking down belated muddled peasants in the black Stubbenitz wood, and skimming the foam on the Prora shore. The per-

turbed spirit is simply a stupid fellow who has received tidings from Rome, a letter which for the life of him he can't understand, and which makes him feel that he cannot breathe within four walls.

It is one o'clock. Baldur and I have just come home; he is very wet, but he doesn't mind. It is not the first time that he has helped me to think.

Ilse—friend, comrade, sister, love, and wife for whom I long, I cannot quibble and haggle with you. I cannot grovel and beg. I would not, if I could, undo the past. I claim the future, though it bring me sorrow worse than death. You are the woman of my choice, the one woman in the world to me. You are my fate for good or ill, our whole lives are intertwined, we belong to each other, and—I love you: therefore I surrender.

But when you return to me a miserable scrap of money, you are well aware that you put be-

tween us more than the distance from Jaromar to Rome, more than the interminable year of separation. You make something within me rise and howl like a wounded beast, then creep off, sullen and brooding, to its den. Never mind. I cannot dilate upon my emotions. I am not fluent and paradoxical like your sculptor. I yield unconditionally. It seems fitting to you to carve little ivory figures and sell them for money. Good. I accept this also at your hands. If this is what you call "freedom," if it makes you happier, I can only fold my arms, bow my head, and wait.

One thing is certain: I shall fulfil my part of our compact. Because your father and I have had certain business relations, or rather, because it has happened to be in my power to do him a service, as it has often enough been in the power of an Ilsenstein to stand by a Jaromar in need, not the faintest shadow of such transactions shall fall upon your path. Not a feather's weight of them shall impede your movements. Nothing of

this shall touch you now or at any time. It would be ignominy. Knowing me so well, how was it then possible for you to—but enough said.

You have wanted for years to go to Rome to study and work. I promised you that you should, whoever might disapprove. Even in losing you it was joy to realize that you had attained your dearest wish through me. This you take from me. It is parting from you again; it is seeing you go still farther from me. Let us not talk about it. But now you are really “free,” are you not, Ilse? You have no other surprise in store for me?

Down by the Jasmund cliffs I dismounted and walked up and down for a while, Baldur following close at my heels, his soft nose sniffing the palm of my hand, the wet salty night clearing my troubled brain. I weighed everything in the balance, all my chances *pro* and *con*. But before I reached the heights of objective wisdom

which I am about to reveal to you, I had a good tussle with the old Adam.

“Start for Rome to-morrow,” he urged. “Be on the spot; snort, fight, and slay.” To which the man up aloft, with the clearer vision, replied, “To what end? Can you even then force love?” For what if I go down there and follow you about like a spaniel—even if I attitudinize at church portals—you will not love me the more for it, Ilse—no, not a whit. Besides, I cannot. I’m not a carpet knight, and I have my work to do.

I have known men to marry with the flattering hope that habit, familiarity, and the irresistible charm of their daily presence, would deepen the somewhat lukewarm affections of their brides, and I have observed that such experiments fail as often as they succeed, from causes not determinable by mathematical calculations. For my part, I cherish no illusions. You and I do not begin like two strangers who meet at a court ball in Berlin and fall in love to the rhythm of a Wald-

teuffel waltz. The companionship, the free simple intercourse which either makes or mars lives, you and I have already had. Think of the hours on hours, the years on years, we have been together. More than to any other soul have I showed you my inner self. You know my ways, my weaknesses and idiosyncrasies, my silent moods, the things that irritate me, the things that give me peace. This may finally be in my favour, it may handicap me in the race, I do not know which; but I know it is a powerful factor always working for or against me. Nothing can take our past from us; not Rome, not art, no devil, and no god. In the face of this phalanx of old associations, I am not so blatant a fool as complacently to impute to my personality, if but administered in still heavier doses, some invincible magic charm sufficient to totally transform a woman of your individuality and independence, revolutionize your theories and creeds, and deaden your long-cherished desires to lead not only an art-life, but

your own life; since that too is strong within you, Ilse, a thirst for rich experience, for more intense emotion, for new, strange things, for uncurbed adventure.

You want your prancings and caracolings; take them. You want Rome; you have it. Enjoy them all, and whatever else you crave. What should I do with an unwilling wife? Marriage by capture is obsolete, and any compulsion of a woman's person or spirit brutal and barbarous. If my friend thinks Africa necessary to his pleasure, mental growth, or financial success, I have no business to try to keep him at home merely because I enjoy his companionship. By what right then shall I say to a woman, "Thus far and no farther." Shall my passion constitute itself a law to direct her steps? Theoretically, then, I am vastly pleased with everything. Ah, Ilse!

Yet whatever be my pain and perplexity, believe me—and forgive my bluntness—I do not want you unless you want me. That is, I want

you with every atom of my being, and shall live and die wanting you—not alone the sweetness of your presence and your beauty which I adore, but also your free glad allegiance, which you cannot yet give me.

Down by the Jasmund cliffs to-night the sea brought counsel. There, where you and I, through the years, have chatted, laughed, and sung, have had our rages and reconciliations, our deep-laid plans and conspiracies, have discussed friends, books, ourselves, our dogs and horses, our theories of life and the beyond, I listened to the voices of the past, of the inexorable ocean, and of my own heart. At length into my unrest came quiet, with the conviction that it is useless for a man to war with fate, and that I cannot honestly act otherwise. The truth is, though I've not yet sighted land ahead, I've cut adrift for ever from the old lines.

I have seen a man's unconscious dominance completely extinguish all the light and gladness

of a woman's nature, and this with no brutal selfishness, no visible tyranny. You know as well as I how things were with us, how strong and upright my father was, how large and wholesome his views, how useful his life, and how from first to last his all-pervading, all-absorbing, masterful personality totally submerged my mother's sensitive spirit. I could not help seeing it, for I loved her, but I should scarcely have got at the heart of things without Boris Subienkow. Dear old Boris, you never liked him much. He wasn't beautiful, I admit, with his Don Quixote profile and gaunt body. He had more brains than lungs, more soul than muscle, more irony than patience, and was altogether so out of tune with life, that death must have been a glad release to him.

When he would mount his hobbies one after another, and charge furiously in every direction, attacking nearly all existing institutions, I used to stare and chuckle, and smoke no end of cigarettes, and not understand very well what he

was raving about, although I vastly enjoyed his diatribes, and thought him the most amusing tutor in the world. So far as the real burden of his song went, I listened somewhat as a child listens, mechanically and without interest, to guarded, veiled hints of elders discussing family secrets and conscious of his presence. Yet somewhere within him he involuntarily stores it all away. Until years after one chance spark suddenly sets a thousand lights ablaze along the receding vista of his past life, his memory begins to search forgotten ways, and all that has been concealed, every unsuspected nook and cranny, is revealed.

What was then remote, foreign to my nature, in Boris' views has become in these last years near to me, my own. What I heard with the incredulous, good-humoured smile of a comfortable young puppy who has no fault to find with existing institutions because they have never interfered with his pleasures, confronts me now, seems sound, true, incontrovertible. His ghost haunts me, in

the one way, I take it, that ghosts haunt us all relentlessly. On the woman-question he was invincible. He out-Ibsened Ibsen. I was at that stage of existence when a boy's vague dream is always preposterously sentimental. A pretty little ringlet, a pretty little ear, a melting eye—these were the things of paramount importance, ringlet, ear, and eye, all quivering, of course, in helpless ecstasy before me.

One day he lured me on to unwonted confidences, cruelly extracted from its secret shrine in my heart that foolish, boyish, ineffable vision as bodiless as St. Cecilia's floating cherubs, held it up in the light of pure reason—where it made but a sorry figure, being only ringlet, ear, and eye—I had formulated nothing beyond except the atmosphere of adoration for me—jeered and derided her until tears of impotent rage stood in my eyes, and I longed to choke him. But he was merciless. He never forgot, never let me forget her. At unexpected moments he would conjure

up that spineless, brainless, organless, transcendental maid, and ridicule her and me without quarter. I was hurt, angry, ashamed, but doggedly unconvinced, and continued to secretly worship her. I have worshipped her fleeting prototype many times since, when, in my calf-days, I for brief periods romantically sighed for a legion of girls—one at a time, of course; I never was in any respect a Turk—and generously invested their charming little silly pates with halos and wings.

Not only did Boris mock, he would frequently wax stern as a Hebrew prophet, and denounce my ideal as an unholy thing, the root of nameless evil, the mother of infinite lies, herself a lie and an abomination, the product of the inequality of the sexes. She at one end of the social scale, the household drudge at the other; between them, every grade of sweetheart, from the haughty patrician beauty down to the doll of the harem, all sisters in falsehood, and direct results of woman's bondage to man, and man's to his senses. If

man should once emerge from his dense barbarism, and recognize woman as the complement of his own soul, no more, no less, he could not before marriage be a maudlin fool, and afterwards an egotist or a brute. Then would come Boris' refrain, "Free the woman and you free the world." He had never known a marriage worthy of the name, never one companionship between man and woman that possessed as much inherent dignity as an ordinary friendship between men. If apparent harmony prevailed, it was due to the sacrifice of self-respect, and the habitual hypocrisy and cowardice of the woman. The most liberal man had one code of honour for men, another for women. Whatever his general theories, his practice presupposed devotion, submission, abnegation of opinions and individuality on the part of the special woman allied with him, whereas with his man-friend, he easily left a certain margin for divergence of views. It was all wrong, and it was steeped in his heart's blood. No sane man

denied the tremendous empire of the senses. No thoughtful man ought to deny the supremacy of the soul. He was no ascetic, he had no feud with nature, but passion was a momentary exaltation or abasement according to circumstances, sublimated on the heights, or degraded in the depths, while along the predominating level plains of existence man and woman should walk together in mutual deference and courtesy, in trust, and truth, and tenderness. Then only would life be worth living. But men, however polished, were savages still at heart. Man had not yet realized that woman was the companion of his highest endeavour, not merely his plaything in relaxation, or his slave.

When I ventured, in adolescent remonstrance, to uphold the dignity of my sex, and inquired if the woman could never be the cause of wretchedness, Boris would thunder, "*No!* and if she is, it is no consequence. She's been a slave from the beginning. She has never had a chance to

be herself. Let her have her swing. Never mind if she swings too far. Her future excesses can never cancel her past record of privations. Let her go as far as she will. She will swing back in due season, and then for the first time will the world find its equilibrium."

When he was at a white heat I could not answer him. He had a certain fiery eloquence, and I was but a crude youth. Still I clung to my ringlet. I thought the realization of his theories would destroy all poetry and all passion.

As if one could! As if we need fear that more enlightenment can ever enfeeble the strong warm pulsations of our human hearts. As if the great primeval force that shapes planets out of nebulous matter, and animates all realms of earth and air and sea, and works with mighty silent strength in the growth of the oak as in the perfume of the rose, in the eagle's flight and the nightingale's rapturous song, in the slumbering soul of the sea-foam as in the loftiest dream of

the human intellect, will abandon us, will move us and thrill us no longer when we shall have learned a little more justice and pity, and some clearness of vision toward ourselves, toward our brothers and our sisters alike, toward all classes, all races, all humanity.

Boris died, leaving me still unconverted to his creed. I went my way, confident of happiness as every healthy boy is. I plunged into life. Everything was attractive to me, good things and bad. I tried all that came in my way, much, perhaps, chiefly through curiosity. I descended into the Venusberg. I didn't stay long. I don't think most men stay there as long as poor Tannhäuser, although the most of us want to know from experience what there is down there. The world was kind to me. I made my bow in many drawing-rooms. At first it was all delectable, and I was as little inclined to find fault as a dragon-fly darting about in August sunshine. But after the first intoxication, I opened my eyes and began

to observe with a vague discontent, marriage, in dissolving views, as it appears in society, and all the ponderous machinery which is set in motion to arrive at this debatable good. Elderly couples restive at heart under the yoke, but smirking together in public for motives of self-aggrandisement; mothers blandly offering their daughters on the public mart; everywhere a tacit agreement to be deaf and dumb and blind to truth, to prophesy smooth things; above all, a diabolical, widespread conspiracy to prevent girls and boys from having the faintest perception of each other's characters. I began to ask myself a few simple questions. Why should girls marry whether or no? Why should society demand that they be educated for this sole end and aim, and at the same time keep them in dense ignorance of what marriage really means? Is it virtue for a girl to be tossed into matrimony like a blind kitten into a pond? Is this sort of thing conducive to her happiness or to that of the man she marries?

Why should the only preparation for a companionship of, say, thirty or forty years be at best a period of glamour at worst, a system of lies, hypocrisy, and low and greedy motives? Was it not monstrous? Was Berlin in reality much superior to Peking or Constantinople? Why should not a woman's moral dignity depend wholly upon herself and not upon any masculine background whatever, be it father, brother, or husband? Why—but I spare you. My *Whys* were many and bitter, and my chaste ringlet vanished for ever from my dreams.

Some of my comrades married young; why, I didn't know. One never has much sympathy with one's friend's motives for marrying. But I observed that their disenchantment was not tardy. Slightly more *blasés* than before, they drifted back to sport and the club, yet they too had languished for a ringlet. I remember it occurred to me one night at the theatre that Shakespeare's genius never struck a truer stroke than when he

killed Romeo and Juliet. One shudders, picturing into what they otherwise would have developed, when, like other elderly grumbling Capulets and Montagues, they would have had ears neither for the lark nor the nightingale. It was no doubt my faithful Boris, who, working still upon me from the shades, set me pondering upon these things.

I had meanwhile no grievous shock, but various experiences, some of which you know, some you do not. But before I loved you nothing was lasting. I began with good reason to doubt the stability of my affections. Perhaps it was all my faulty nature could attain to see a face in a crowd, follow it, dream of it, long to follow and dream of it for ever, then suddenly forget it, seeing another of surpassing loveliness. And always Boris' ghost haunted me, with his slighted, forgotten warnings, his fierce denunciations of conventional lies, his passionate prayer for fearlessness and freedom in marriage as be-

tween men friends, and he was right. In my soul I know it. At first, when I loved you, I forgot. It is so easy to forget; so easy to follow the old traditions. I urged you unremittingly. All men urge mightily when they want their will. I urged too much, I see to-night. I thought if you bore my name all would be well. Men are always fools enough to think that, but why? To-night I renounce such delusions. If I am to be wretched I will establish my wretchedness on broader lines. We will have truth between us. If, by my urging, I did you wrong, I will make what reparation is in my power. Ilse Jaromar shall in every respect be as free as Ilse Ilsenstein. For you do not love me, Ilse. Sometimes I have been weak enough to persuade myself that you feel more than the simple old affection for me; but I see clearly to-night. You trust me. In need you would turn to your old comrade, but as to loving, you are an infant babbling in the dark. The legal functionary and the Church

have mumbled and written something and pronounced us man and wife. How does that help me, when I know that you remain in your heart the little girl you were ten years ago? For your Undine you cannot have a better model than yourself. You too have not yet found the soul, which is only born through love.

Queer irrelevant phantoms of the past race through my head as I write. It was down by the Jasmund cliff, when you were seven and I thirteen, that I taught you to swim, holding you in my arms, and counting, "One—two," for your strokes. I had to smile in all my distress down there to-night, remembering how you wriggled, and how little you were, and how awfully frightened, although you were too proud, even then, to confess it. When you were eight, I taught you to ride. All that Malte showed me, his idol, you learned, and you were better at it and cleverer than I. When you were ten and I sixteen, I taught you to shoot. And whatever a boy teaches

his brother I taught you, and was prouder of you than of myself always; and we two for years were a stronghold of joy, defying our elders and the world. We had our bitter quarrels, but even in my fits of sullenness and anger I longed for the clasp of your cool, slender hand. You went to boarding-school in Switzerland, to learn heaven knows what. It was there you met your Russian friends with their advanced ideas. I went to Berlin to learn classics and war. Nothing made any difference. When we met we took up the old threads. We were the old chums Ilse and Odo again, wayward, honest, affectionate brothers.

Then came the wonder and the change. I loved you; I told you so. But you, in spite of your French, your books, your music, your art, and your Russian enlightenment, remained Ilse the child so far as I was concerned. And that is what you are to-day. But I did not know it beyond the shadow of a doubt until your letter came with its enclosure, which taught me

wonders—mysteries—and plain sailing for the future.

Ilse, dearest, shall I whine because your nature is not my own? Shall I reproach you because you are yourself? It is you whom I love, come life, come death. If, as I believe, you return to me, I am blessed beyond all men; if not, it is my fate. But I have faith. At least you love no one else. I trust the past. The Ilsensteins and Jaromars were allies through the ages. Never did one betray the other. The old times are gone, the old might, the old violence, yet something remains of the old loyalty; and we two, as we stand, are the last of the race. Yet this is no reason, I know. It shall be as your heart wills.

I thank you for much that is gracious and sweet in your letter. I try to follow you from day to day, and I note your friends, pleasures, and experiences. I care for all that you do, and think, and see, and know. If you should need

me I would come swiftly; otherwise I remain here at my post, where my duties hold me. Good-night. I hear the fall of the breakers. It may be superstition, it may be folly, but I believe that you will come back to Jaromar, and, safe in my arms, listen to the surf and the winds—content to stay, loving our home best, seeking no more problems, finding all you need here, even your art.

Have I not always said your eyes contradict your mouth? The eyes are restless, thoughtful, unsatisfied—ages old. But the mouth is fresh, young, happy—prophetic of love, and joy, and warmth. The mouth is my friend. It is the mouth that I trust. I stake everything on the mouth. And the eyes—they are sweet eyes all the same—let them wander and seek. They will grow tired. They will come back. See, I show my hand frankly. There is nothing mysterious, fascinating, inscrutable in me, as in your Roman friends.

Here I remain, and remember, and wait, and hope.

ODO.

VI.

From the same to the same.

SCHLOSS JAROMAR,

November 17.

DEAREST,—

The boy Ete, whom I inhumanly kept waiting for my letter last night, posted no doubt a foolish kind of message, for which, if it offends, I crave your pardon. Letters written after midnight are apt to be morose or maudlin; and mine, alas, was both, and biographical to boot. How can a man stultify himself more completely than when he attempts to seize the intangible—your feelings, my feelings, memories, impressions, sympathies—and categorically label them like apothecaries' vials? We can make no map of our own hearts without writing "unexplored continent" on the greater

portion of them. And, as for you, your longest established mental boundary lines advance and recede in bewildering fashion. But enough of retrospection. Your letters, bright and sweet as they are, sometimes strike deeper, wilder chords in me than you suspect; and I could better master our problem if it were my neighbour's case.

To-day, by clear sunlight and a cheerful breeze, I hasten to send you a sensible greeting. I have just returned from Ilsenstein. All are well; and when I see your father's relieved face, with the haggard lines washed away as if by enchantment, I take courage and think I cannot have made a mistake in persuading you to become Ilse Jaromar. Don't think me ungenerous when I say this. It is not to influence you an atom; but it is the truth nevertheless. He is studying soils like a Liebig, and beginning every imaginable kind of improvement at once. Your mother is well, but how you can prefer Rome and art to Odo Jaromar and our island is a mystery to her—to me

too. That mincing horror, Charlotte von Bodenfels, was there. She is the only mortal who thus far has dared to question me about you, but she rushes in where, as the English poet says, angels fear to tread. It is fair to add she does not remain long. She is promptly shown the door. "How can she go so far from her dear home, and live only among cold statues?" she remarked, with her ogle and infantile lisp. "Why shouldn't she go to Jericho and blow a penny whistle if it pleases her?" I retorted—rather brutally, I admit—as I lighted my cigar and strolled away down the terrace.

Dear, dear Ilse, you know without words how deeply I care for all that you do, and all that you read—your Shelley studies, your generous enthusiasm in every direction, most of all for your delight in Roman fountains which I, too, love. I hear that rich, cool, full splashing in every one of your letters. It is the next best thing to our sea.

You are a most brilliant butterfly, and flit in

the sunshine in many directions. I may not always seem to follow you, yet I note everything. I remember, too, that Psyche, the sweet, loving, heroic soul, floated like you on rainbow butterfly wings.

You ask about Margot. She is older than I thought at first, perhaps seventeen or eighteen, and not so very small now that she is on her feet; yet she suggests smallness, having a little head and a slight face.

She is a dark, lank child, with a wide, if expressive, mouth, and soft, pleading eyes like a dog or a deer. I have written to her people in France and in Dantzic, her father's home, as yet with no result. Meanwhile Walpurga has lost her heart to the little foreign maid, and begs me to keep her here whatever comes. "A bit of a thing like that can't eat or spoil or cost much," my old nurse gravely assures me, "and it's good luck to have something young in the old house again." Not only Walpurga, but the entire household, is

singularly interested in the stranger and her broken German, which she learns with extraordinary rapidity, and speaks with captivating, gentle grace. Even old Malte's stout heart succumbs. He would walk five miles to hear Margot say, "Thanks," and get one of her faint pretty smiles. There is something plaintive in the child. The sea excited her at first beyond control. But of late she seems reconciled with its solemn insistence, and wanders down to the cliffs often and remains long listening to the waves and watching the gulls.

Malzahn and Freolin are here to dine to-day; some other men coming shortly to shoot partridges. We bachelors shall hold high carnival. "In thy orisons be all our sins remembered." I kiss your clay-tipped fingers, and am

Your faithful,

ODO.

I am haunted by a vision of you at the piano, all those men in evening dress standing

about and gloating over you, while you sweetly inform them what is the best remedy for the blue-devils. When De Musset wrote your little song he had doubtless been reading his Horace, who, you remember, sings in his own lovely way—

Quid sit futurum cras, fuge quærere; et

Quem sors dierum cumque dabit, lucro

Adpone: nec dulces amores

Sperne puer, neque tu choreas.

But Horace's equable soul never took his Glyceras and Lydias very seriously; poor De Musset's life, whatever consolation he may have derived from *la musique et la beauté*, and the making of exquisite verse, was a sad fiasco; and neither poet, so far as I know, suggests a specific for the melancholy of an everyday fellow whose duller senses are not easily charmed by passing delights, but whose soul-grip is most tenacious of what it once has seized, while all the *dulces amores* for which he cares a straw the irony of fate separates from him by half a continent.

VII.

From the Countess to Count von Jaromar.

PALAZZO MALASPINA,

November 20.

Oh, Odo, how am I to answer your letter! A hundred things to say flash through my mind, and I cannot utter one! By turns you draw me irresistibly and repel me—make me feel that the world were well lost to be with you, and that never, never, never can we live together in that ideal friendship of which we have both so often spoken. What is it—oh, what is it? why do you make it so difficult for me? for it is you, *you*, Odo, who are causing all this misunderstanding, and not I. Oh, Odo, my dear friend, my best friend, there is such a pain at my heart. No true woman could read a letter like yours, and not feel proud of such love and abased at her own unworthiness of it. All my life seemed to go out to you at certain words. I am only your

foolish Ilse, and I cannot tell you what I feel in my heart. I can only say that though my eyes are too dry now after my tears, there is, as it were, something worse at my heart weeping and sobbing.

Odo, if your letter had been in the same strain throughout, I think—I think—I don't know what I think—perhaps I would have telegraphed to you to come to Rome; perhaps I would have left everything and everyone here and fled northward with but one thought—to reach Jaromar, to be with you, to hear from your lips what it is in your heart, to be like one of our north-sea fishermen, after long voyaging, dumb from sheer gladness to be at home again, merely to sit still, in utter content, realizing only, "I am at home—home at last."

But then—but then—you say words which chill me inexpressibly. I can hardly explain, I fear. You will think me foolishly sensitive, reading into your words what is not there. But some-

thing in me resents something in you. There, I have said it. Is it too harsh and crude? Do not mistake me, my friend; I do not mean that there is something between us that must of necessity keep us apart—that there is anything to justify your assertion, so emphatically and confidently made, that I do not love you. But, with all your courteous, nay, your chivalrous regard for me and my position, you unconsciously write, now and then, in a tone that I deeply resent. When you allude to my passionate desire for independence, for free scope for my art-life, for individual development, you are generally the Odo Jaromar whom I have known so long, my dearest comrade, my best friend. But when you write to your “unwilling wife”—they are your words, not mine—and, in lordly fashion, say, “You want your prancings and caracolings, take them,” then you are no longer that comrade whom I love, but Odo von Jaromar whom I have married, and who looks upon Ilse Jaromar as a very different person

from Ilse Ilsenstein. Think of it, Odo, before you call me petulant or unreasoning. I am a woman, a proud woman, and, far short of my most moderate ideal of an artist as I am, I am yet sufficiently the artist to know that I have that earnest passion, as well as something of the power, to *create*, to work with heart, and soul, and brain, and hand, and every fibre of one's being. True, I *wanted* to come to Rome, but it was no whim that prompted me, no foolish caprice. I came *to find myself artistically*; I came to learn how to do the best that nature has put into my power to do. And then—then, you write, “You want your prancings and caracolings, take them.” *Merci, mon prince!* How generous! My dreams, my hopes, my aspirations, my studies, my glad toil, my renunciations even (for I have renounced, to serve my end, though you do not understand), are “prancings and caracolings.” Moreover, I am not here to prance and caracole by my own right and will, not even by the disposition of

Son Altesse le Bon Dieu, to quote your friend Boris; but because my excellent and amiable *sposo* autocratically says, "Irresponsible creature, as it is your nature to prance and caracole, you may!"

You see that you have angered me. Yet displeasure is a little thing. But one short phrase in your letter gave me a chill—not of momentary resentment merely—but of *dread*. Dread, Odo, of you, of myself, of ourselves, of this marriage-bond with which we have linked ourselves one to the other. If you can tell me that the phrase—a trivial little thing, you may think, to take so seriously—was a mere slip, a second's unconscious irritation, I will gladly forget it. But otherwise—well—here are the words. You say, "What if I go to Rome and follow you about like a spaniel," and then you add, "even if *I should attitudinize at church portals.*" When you said that, you insulted *me*, and you insulted my friend. Friedrich Herwegh may have his faults, but I do not be-

lieve he would say any such thing of you, were he to know you and have any real or imaginary cause of dislike.

Ah, I have half forgiven you! Perhaps more than half, you undeserving fellow! I was not going to read your letter again. I was going to forget everything in it that touched me to deep affection and admiration. I was going to be—ah, you cannot imagine what a haughty and unbending and altogether objectionable Ilse, when suddenly down came a great tress of hair, and made that smear at the corner over my malicious last sentence; and with it fell that amber pin you gave me a year ago. You know the one I mean? The small round ball, as transparent as yellow wine, and with the tiny little fly preserved in it from time immemorial. You found the piece yourself, after a wild storm along our Rügen coasts, and had it made into a hair-pin for me. It was almost our first quarrel *in a whole month*—and what a delightful one it was! I wanted

you to have it as a neckerchief-pin; you insisted it was to replace the beautiful ivory one I lost that day I fell among the bracken, after insisting upon looking at the hawk's nest you had discovered. Ah, what a fright I got when that fierce-eyed falcon almost dashed into my face; and how in the most undignified fashion I fell back, stumbled, and disappeared into a deep sea of fern; and how angry I was with you for laughing so uncontrollably, till I couldn't help joining, with the result that all the hawks in the neighbourhood must have been frightened out of their wits.

And so that little amber pin—I have kissed it, and put it in my hair again—made me think of many things; and I am quite sure that you are the best and kindest and noblest of all the Jaromars that ever lived, and that I am the most forgiving and delightful and lovable and *deserving* of all the Ilsensteins.

But I am not all smiles, though the frowns

have flown. Your letter has made me ponder deeply. I am glad that we are so much at one.

Your affectionate

ILSE.

VIII.

From the same to the same.

PALAZZO MALASPINA,

November 21.

MY DEAR ODO,—

Since writing to you yesterday I have read your letter again and again. It is in the main a noble and true letter and like yourself—and yet!

Well, I *am convinced* that malignant sprites sometimes creep into one's letters, and weave such a spell about the simplest expressions that all kinds of horrid things are the result, and I am sure that an extra-large, an extra-malignant, and a horribly industrious sprite must have found its way into yours!

Something—I can't define it—keeps haunting, haunting me! I wish I could shake it off. I am so touched, so deeply touched by all you say. And, Odo, I *do* care for you, surely you cannot really doubt this. I *know* how true is my affection and esteem for you! But really, if—

Now I was going to say something that would anger you, my friend, but see—I have not! Instead, some foolish tears suddenly came into my eyes, and one little traitor has fallen on to my paper and made a great ugly, well-meaning “full stop” after “if.”

Ah, those *ifs*! There was once a beautiful princess, and she was called *If*; and she lived in a lovely castle that was called *If*; and it was the most delightful place in all the world. And men came from all parts to that dear land beyond the Rainbow, of which *If* is the capital, and everyone wooed the charming princess *If*, and begged her to give them at least one word of comfort: and to each and all this good Genius—for that is

what she was—gave a magic word wrapped in a little veil of golden mist; so that every one went back into his own place well content. She gave it to the poor and to the rich, to the fortunate and the unfortunate, to the noble-minded and to the mean-natured, to the good and the bad; and each rejoiced in that little word, for it was the very image of the beautiful princess, and it uttered *If* in the most bewildering, satisfying way. The poor man knew what he would do; the rich man went to the springs of health with it; the fortunate and the good kissed it but flung it away, sometimes rashly and sometimes only at the Gates of Heaven; and the unfortunate and the evil held it up as a charm against the avenging Sword, and even thought to stay fate with its redeeming grace, and . . . Oh, Odo, Odo, I cannot write any more, I am so miserable! Yes, yes, I *will* write; see, I have controlled my foolish self again. But, alas, how easy it would be to give another version to my *If* story! It is a poor

wretched little elf without a soul, but with a smile on its lips and mockery in its voice.

But, Odo, you will have guessed something of what is in my mind. You cannot have forgotten how, when you said, "*If* my Ilse is the woman I take her for, she will come back to Jaromar," I answered, "*But* if your Ilse is *not* the woman you take her for, what then?" And again, Odo, you must remember how, the day before we were married, I drew you out of hearing of my father, and said to you in all seriousness, "*If* this thing that is to be between us, this bond of honour, prove a delusion, you must blame yourself as well as me. For I have warned you." And when you were about to interrupt eagerly, I added, "I do not know myself after all. I thought I did. I *must* go to this far-off Rome. But what if I '*find myself*' there, what if I know that Jaromar can never, never be to me"—and then, alas, I chanced to look at my father, and in the afternoon glow I saw that the seams in his long black

coat were almost as white as the hair that now falls about that dear worn face. I could not say another word; but, Odo, I must tell you *now* that when you clasped me in your arms and kissed me on the brow, I heard that miserable, *miserable* little word whirling in my ears: and all the next morning even, when the bells were ringing so blithely, their tune was a jangled one for me, because it was all *if—if—if*.

Shall I whisper something into your ear? Odo, dear, I have forgotten all the sadness and bitterness in your last letter; I have kissed it away! and I have forgotten all my stupid *ifs*, and know only and care only to know that I am Ilse Ilsenstein, your old play-mate and sweetheart; and that I love you, Odo—yes, that I love you.

But, my dear husband—see, I say it gladly and freely—if I have not drifted away from you, neither do I yet see the road that leads back to Jaromar. Surely, our love can wait. What is it in this thing “Love” that is so impatient? Why

does it vex itself so? If I were in love—nay, forgive the phrase, dear; I was speaking, as it were, as a spectator; you understand me?—I should think a calm, unquestioning patience the finest attitude for either man or woman.

Oh, dear me! I had so much I wanted to say to you, but there is that tiresome bell. I *know* it is some one coming to see me. Who can it be? Do you ever catch yourself wondering idly thus? And do you know at what I am wondering most just now? I will not tell you, for you would laugh at me. But I have coiled my hair in the way that old nameless sculptor did it in his “Woman of Athens,” and—but no more! I hear him, or her, coming. Addio, dear Odo.

ILSE.

IX.

From the Countess to Count von Jaromar.

PALAZZO MALASPINA.

Is it only an hour or so since I wrote to you, my dear Odo? It was with a start I realized this when I sat down at my little desk. It has your photograph upon it, in that old Danish silver frame you brought me one day from Copenhagen, and a little cluster of what the Romans call St. Agnes' roses, they are so tenderly pink and white, heaped about it. My letter to you has gone—is, indeed, already lost among thousands of others not half as charming and lovable and forgiving little notes, in that great whirlpool of correspondence in S. Silvestro in Capito, and so I cannot add a postscript to it: but, like a good and amiable Ilse, sit down afresh, pen in hand.

But—whirlpool! How that word has suddenly sprung up like a will-o'-the-wisp, and dances before me till my mind is full of you and

far-off Rügen instead of my late visitor. Ah, how well I remember you, when the spring tides were at the flood, and that whirlpool off the Black Rock—the Kelpie of Rügen, as the Thiessow fishermen call it—was surging horribly, like a torn cobra writhing in death throes, and how, when Peter Helder's boat was drawn closer and closer, with his little son in it, his only child, you dashed out in a small skiff, and by almost a miracle snatched the child from the heavy boat and managed to whirl round and round, but always edging further and further away from that sickening, foam-clotted spot. The men cheered you, Odo, and Peter Helder kissed your hands and sobbed with excitement, but not one of them knew as well as I did what a *hero* you were. And I know what it was that made you so ghastly white, even after, by your strong arm and dauntless nerve, you had won back little Jan's and your own life. It was not fear of death, but fear of losing me for ever and ever. It was then, you

told me long afterward, that you first knew what dumb longing was tearing at your heart.

Ah! is there in all this Italy a stronger, braver, or truer man than Odo von Jaromar?

And now, my friend, to my letter. Will-o'-the-wisp, adieu! I am in Rome again, and instead of watching you striving with the whirlpool, I am looking at my unfinished "Undine," and my freshly-modelled "Emilia," and a firm little ivory-paper calling-card with on it the words, *La Contessa Lucrezia Mallerini, Casa Barolo, Villa Ludovisi*.

I wonder what she is. I mean *in herself*. I have read, or heard, that a woman of the north can no more understand a woman of the south than a white swan can understand a black jaguar. Who said it, I wonder? I used to laugh at it as so stupid. But perhaps there is something in it. Contessa Mallerini has been so communicative and so winsome (for her), and yet I am no whit the wiser, and do not believe that I am even on the right track at all.

You have not forgotten my telling you about her, have you? I met her and her sombre husband, Cesare, recently at dinner, you recollect?

I had no idea till she came in that I had so identified my "Emilia Viviani" with her. It was startling; so much so, that as soon as I decently could I leant across my little table so as to shove up the swing lamp, and then dropped a loose pink silk scarf, which I was wearing, over the model. But either it caught or my visitor thought or pretended it did, for in a moment she had stooped, delicately snatched the scarf away, and with some gracious words protested her anxiety for my handiwork. But in a second she recognized the likeness. I saw her dark, lustreless eyes flash for a moment. I think she was about to speak about it at once, but she did not. We had a pleasant conversation, of a kind. She told me that she too is an artist. "Not a professional one, of course," she added, and I did not at all like the way she said it. For myself, I can quite

believe that these southern Italians never can understand northern women. She paints a little. So far as I can gather, music is her *forte*. I could not but feel annoyed at this, for the other night, when I sang my little De Musset song, she refused to sing. I wonder if she too is a contralto. Well, we chatted away. I offered her coffee, and she seemed pleased; though, for myself, I was already disquieted by her presence, and would have been glad to bow gracefully, and say, "*A rivederla.*" Suddenly she began to question me about the technique of my work. How did I like carving in ivory? Does not the cost of the material make any real profit impossible? That it is sculpture *de luxe*, is it not? That I must be lonely, so far away from my husband? And so on. But all the time her eyes were wandering, wandering. "Yes," I replied, vaguely surprised at her interest. "I began that study of Emilia on such and such a day." "That was before we met," she said, quietly. Then I knew

what she meant. "It is an ideal study," I added, hurriedly; "a whim. I thought I would make an Emilia Viviani. Emilia Viviani was the woman whom the English poet Shelley loved, and—" "And about whom you heard from Friedrich Herwegh," she interrupted, with, I think, the worst possible taste. "You know Signor Herwegh well?" I asked. "I know Signor Herwegh well," was the reply, in a mechanical voice; "and I also know all about the 'Epipsychidion.'" What a strange woman she is. She lifted her head, and looked at me. For the first time I noticed she had two shadowy little wrinkles along her under-eyelids. I had fancied her not more than three or four and twenty; she may be five years older. The heavy Abruzzi lace she wore round her neck does not suit her so well as she thinks it does; personally I cannot understand how she can wear it. It is peasant's lace, you know, coarse in texture and workmanship. "You are looking at my lace, I see; I often wear this

Abruzzi stuff; it is to please my husband. He is feudal seignor of a district up in the Abruzzi, beyond Solmona." Now, I am perfectly sure that is not her reason at all. "Why, in heaven's name, should she say so, then?" you will exclaim; but *that* I cannot tell you. She was taking her leave at last, when she caught sight of my little ivory medallion of you. "And this: is it your husband?" She looked at it so long and scrutinizingly—or at it and the photograph together I should say, for she had taken up the latter—that I began to feel quite jealous. Altogether a most enigmatic young woman. She said several things that puzzled me. By the way, I spoke of jealousy just now. She asked me, looking at the portrait, if you were of a jealous nature. "Certainly not," I answered. I have promised to call on her soon; and she is to come here again ere long with her husband.

[Later.]

I had written thus far when Ulrich Heideloff and Herwegh called. He (F. H.) is a strange man. The other night he was affability itself when I asked him about the Mallerinis. A little while ago he seemed as chill as an iceberg when I questioned him about Signora Lucrezia. He was surprised, and apparently not pleasurably, to learn that she had paid me a long call, and he was rather rude. Every now and again there is something about Friedrich Herwegh that perplexes—indeed, even annoys—me. He is far more a southerner than a northerner. He professes the most ideal respect for women, and yet I have heard him again and again speak of them, individually, in a way that sent a little jar along my nerves. I fancy he does not at all care for my Contessa, and yet he says he admires her greatly. “She is a woman who must have had many lovers,” I remarked questioningly. It was

then that he said one of those little things I do not like in him: "How cruel women are with that poisoned arrow, the past tense!" I felt indignant, for I never for a moment wished to imply that I think the Contessa Mallerini in any degree *passée*. But like your silly Ilse, I flushed, and then I saw that Herwegh was smiling maliciously. It is a pity that so fine a man should stoop to such little things.

[Midnight.]

Am I never to be left alone to finish a letter? I had just written the above when Lilien Röhrich came in "to keep me company." But, oh, dear me, I am tired of people. There was a man outside calling "*Limone—limone freschi!*" with the most wearisome reiteration. At last I could stand it no longer, and so I availed myself of Frau Röhrich's suggestion, and went with her to her rooms. She talked much to me about certain acquaintances we know in common. I see that

she does not like the Mallerinis, and that she has something amounting to a fear of Madame Lucrezia. She spoke most warmly of Herwegh. I have done him injustice. She says his *per-siflage* means nothing. She told me some things about him which convince me that he is as admirable as a man as an artist. He has few real friends. Only women understand him. Yes, he is a fine fellow. To-morrow night I have promised to go to the Röhrichs to dinner. They are to have a score of friends. I am so tired. Good-night. ILSE.

X.

From the Count to the Countess von Jaromar.

SCHLOSS JAROMAR,

November 26.

You do not like my letter? So much the worse for me. I wish you liked it better than *ivoire vert*. But what can I do? The soul of me had to write it. At least, I thought so that night.

The moment it was gone, remorse set in. I became suddenly aware that it was not an eminently suave and cheerful communication, and tried to intimate this, with a quasi-apology, the following day. Now, upon sober second thought, having let a little "grass grow" since, and succumbing to the soothing and conciliatory influences of three delicious letters from you, which are lying open here before my eyes—three dainty, vaguely fragrant, charmingly contradictory letters, differing one from another, as if written by three different women—I conclude to retract—*nothing*. I hold my ground, and even if I am wrong, I am going to stand fast. It affords me grim satisfaction to realize that my ill-natured prejudices, if such they be, are at any rate stable. You can "build upon" them, which is more than can be said for your Roman phantasmagories; and in our unequal conflict this is surely well. For whatever comes, one of us must always know where to find the other. Now it is obviously out of the ques-

tion for me to hope to find you, my brilliant, flitting, erratic, elusive, sweetest Ilchen, never of one mood three consecutive seconds, and as I cannot emulate your bewildering changes of base, I choose to adopt diametrically opposite methods. I will be the rugged landmark which my lovely nomad may seek when she is weary of roaming.

Are you frowning? Dearest, dearest, do you suppose that I really want to offend you? Yet, better a thousand times your displeasure than your indifference. Indifference in love is death. For this reason your resentment, your heat and childlike reproaches, have thrown me into higher spirits than I have known since you left. Such is the unregenerate nature of man.

To return to the fateful letter. As to its principles, I repeat, I don't budge an inch. I'm as dogged as Martin Luther. But I deplore the inordinate length of my harangue. It is no doubt a man's duty to make himself odious now and then. Still he can be odious with a semblance

of tact and delicacy; he need not be odious on a colossal scale. Why should he write a letter like unto the stupefying, interminable rush of a waterfall? But however imperfect the form, I cannot retract the *import*, nor would you in your secret heart have me. For see, Ilse, with superb, reckless, womanlike inconsequence, you ignore everything that it does not please you to consider. I do not say a woman cannot be logical—that is a too stupid assumption—but she rarely possesses a sense of logical integrity. She is lawless, and at her own sweet will makes her obeisance to reason or flies at his approach. So you ignore your own letter, to which mine was but the direct response. You ignore all things that madden a man. You create the world afresh each morning, and smilingly declare that it is good. You place me in an unparalleled situation, from which St. Anthony could scarcely have extricated himself with dignity, and are then quite aggrieved when I, an unholy man, roar with exasperation.

*Bless the
wound-up doll
"Papa," when she
was only a rough
pretty Roman puppet
is their métier. The
and they can smirk a
in a most seductive
tell a tale of an "If"
Mérimée, the story
the most splendid a
could have run faster
not been dead.
Dear sunny Ilse
reckoning on your
temper, without wh
three iridescent le
Two of them are
had no abysses.
to resent, but you
gods of Rome!—*

Bless her dear little heart! Did one of her wound-up dolls refuse to say "Mamma" and "Papa," when she squeezed it? Never mind. It was only a rough rustic Rügen doll. Make the pretty Roman puppets dance the more for it. It is their *métier*. Their machinery is well oiled, and they can smirk and open and shut their eyes in a most seductive manner. O Ilse, I too can tell a tale of an "If." It is, according to Prosper Mérimée, the story of Roland's horse. He was the most splendid animal in the world, and he could have run faster than the wind—*if*—he had not been dead.

Dear sunny Ilse, I am bad to-day. I am reckoning on your unfathomable sweetness of temper, without which I were a lost soul. Your three iridescent letters are shining here at me. Two of them are as blissful as if human nature had no abysses. In one, your first impulse is to resent, but your second—praise be to the nine gods of Rome!—is to forgive the sinner whose

rhetoric was not to your taste. Be comforted, Ilchen, it is never to my own. That words are a means to conceal thoughts is often a beneficent dispensation; for instance, when one has to talk with Charlotte Bodenfels; but that the rascals contradict and travesty our best sentiments, invest them with foreign shapes, meanings, and colours, mock and betray them—this is, in truth, a grievous matter. For such transgressions, I humbly implore your pardon. Draw a great broad magnanimous line through all the obnoxious phrases (except “attitudinizing at church portals,” which I cannot repudiate, for it is founded upon fact, it is architectually attractive, it pleases me; besides, I think it rather neat. But notice how inoffensively, and almost deprecatingly, I insinuate this bit of rebellion into a discreet parenthesis where it will scarcely be observed). As for “prancings” and “caracolings,” they are abominable words. No terms are harsh enough for them, and nothing could be more just than your indignation. For

they do indeed suggest pernicious things; for instance, the gaudy trappings and stereotyped antics of some old circus nag, and no species of Pegasus whatever, with god-like soarings and poises above a grovelling world.

Then forgive, shrive, absolve your Odo. Lay your lovely hands upon my suppliant head, and give me your benediction. But grant me plenary indulgence, too, for the sins which I am surely going to commit every time that you goad me beyond endurance.

You have made me glad, wildly glad, and probably you will not suspect why, as you never seem to suspect why some of your most amiable remarks infuriate me. When your letters come, I usually spend some time in readjusting my impressions, which at first get surprisingly out of focus, I am sure. I am conscious that I must destroy the proportions of your charming little fleeting sketches. I probably make a too matter-of-fact inventory of your friends, pleasures, and

occupations. Shall one try to seize the rainbow? You are happy and well. That ought to satisfy me. I cannot follow your work very clearly. Doubtless that mysterious art-nature, about which we have lost our tempers on innumerable occasions, and which is going to provide us with food for excellent discussions down to a green old age, is thrilling and dilating prodigiously, and girding up its loins to do mighty things. But, candidly, if a sublunary being may venture to inquire, you have not actually done much work yet, have you? Only a model of "Undine" and of that somewhat remote young person, the Viviani. A queer notion that, and not much money in it, permit your friend, the practical country farmer, to add. While holding myself aloof from your pecuniary affairs, as categorically requested, I nevertheless retain a certain benevolent interest in them, and I think there is more bread and butter in Undine—particularly if you let her mouth contradict her eyes. That is an irresistible fascination, and will vastly

increase her market value. Take the disinterested advice of a man who, if destitute of esoteric art-culture, has some knowledge of the stock exchange.

Are you vexed? Then write me another hasty, inconsistent, adorable little letter, and I will love it more than my life, and kiss every tear-stain in it, and feel a great warm glow in my heart, and strength enough to defy all evil chances, so perverse and jubilant is

Your

ODO.

XI.

From the same to the same.

SCHLOSS JAROMAR,

November 27.

Sometimes in your letters you approach me with richest, fairest promise. Sometimes you recede and elude me. Sometimes, reviewing the whole field, I am forced to ask myself if I am in

truth a man of sense, or the veriest fool, the most egregious ass that the Lord ever made. Sometimes—

It is well that a man has his daily work to do, though he may now and then grumble and rail at it. To-day, as usual, I rose at half-past five and rode out at six. Even if there is at this season no important field work to summon me, there is enough in general going on, and I see no reason to change my habits, especially as my building projects interest me greatly, and the mild winter permits us to make good progress. I hope to see my model English cottages roofed and plastered before the snow comes; then I shall leave them to dry. After my coffee at eight, I am engaged the entire morning in my study with correspondence, business of all kinds, the reports of my stewards and others, as well as various embassies from the village. I often smile to find myself sitting here like an octogenarian patriarch, gravely responding to appeals of the most delicate

nature. Old Malte's ruddy countenance usually looks in during my morning session, for he is teaching Margot to ride, and feels it incumbent on him to communicate, with the *empressement* of court bulletins, every stage of her progress. She is not like that fearless Ilse-girl, who inherited nerve, courage, and love of horses in every drop of her blood; still, Margot does well—she pleases us. I am hurriedly building a *manège*, so that we need not be interrupted when the cold January weather comes; and then, under cover, it will greatly amuse me to teach her to jump and play the *jeu de rose*, and the ring-game, and the other knightly pastimes in which you and I long ago won our spurs. She is beginning to gain perceptibly from so much air and exercise. She was certainly rather anæmic, but is well built, and has a good chest. A bookseller's daughter in Lyons—did I tell you?—her mother a rather exacting invalid, as I gather from Margot's innocent revelations, the poor child has never had a chance to

grow rosy and strong. She is pale, not only from grief, I fancy, but from inveterate old habit. It is now my ambition to put some fresh colour in her cheeks. Observe how my paternal instinct "mounteth with occasion." She is a good little thing, Margot, and fits so perfectly in our household machinery, one can hardly remember that she was not always here. In my library she is inestimable. I only begin now to realize how neglected I was before her advent. Beside her neatness and system, she is a real little bookworm, a true book-lover, with a delight beyond her years in bindings, and margins, and type. On such points we have become great chums. I have thus far unearthed for her, by way of relatives, a bachelor uncle in Paris, who desires her presence apparently not at all, and a cousin in Danzig, a matron with a large family, who wants her, it would seem, still less: which is curious, as her father's modest affairs were left in good order, and she would not be dependent on her kinsmen,

if not precisely seated in the lap of luxury. Perhaps somebody may yet claim her, some Borike with a more hospitable soul and a breath of compassion for the orphan, but I confess I should be sorry. Margot has won a place in all our hearts. She is, of course, not gay yet. One could not expect it so soon after the shock and sorrow. Her eyes are full of languor and memories, and she has most heart-breaking, forlorn moods. But she is apt, receptive, grateful, affectionate, and very young after all, and so occasionally her natural instinct of fun and lightheartedness breaks out in the sweetest and freshest way. At such moments she is irresistible, and would delight you. Then without being a beauty, she has something infinitely engaging in her dark little face, startling pretty moments, and those long thin lines of cheek, throat, and limb that are so maidenly and touching, and that a man likes to look at very well, although aware that they will be prettier and better rounded some day. You would model

her, I am sure, as a Daphne or a dryad, or perhaps as Anacreon's boy Bathyllos, with his *χεῖλος ἀπαλὸν γέμον τε Πειθοῦς*, for she has that mingling of lank, boyish contours and feminine softness dear to the ancients, and, I may add, not hated of us moderns. But Margot's voice is her supreme charm. You know that there was never a man on earth more sensitive to voices than I, and you will understand me when I say that this child's voice would melt the soul of an arch-fiend. It has marvellous sweetness, not the nauseating, syrupy, cloying, intentional sweetness of certain actresses and society women, but something innocently caressing, warm, melodious, and with the most fascinating, limpid intonations. If she were a harpy and had that voice, she would attract men. Freolin never heard her speak, except to say "Good morning" as she passed him one day at the library-door, but I see plainly he is in a state of troubadour-exaltation and restlessness, staring at every window, and looking sud-

denly over his shoulder as if ghosts walked in our respectable house at mid-day. But I know well what my duties in this case are, and like the sternest old duenna, I keep the child out of his way. If, as Paul Heyse says, *Die Stimme ist der Mensch*, it is a loving and lovely soul that greets us with Margot's voice.

I was called away from you yesterday to receive twenty men who valiantly stormed my gates in a hay-cart. They were what the newspaper reporters would gloatingly describe as the "flower of the German army," but they looked like jolly school-boys off for a holiday, and were in the most preposterous spirits; very young men, only some of whom I'd met. Freolin invited them, it seems. I gave them something to eat, drink, and smoke, and went out with them later, taking Malte and Ete. We divided into three groups, and shot a couple of stags and forty or fifty hares.

Men come in shoals now, for the hunting and

weather are superb. I like my old friends to feel comfortable in Jaromar. I like them to know that they are welcome, whether they remember to telegraph from Berlin or arrive unannounced. I like to come home and find Mahlzahn and Freolin, divested of their uniforms, stretching themselves in my dressing-gowns and smoking in my study.—Those shining ones, inseparable as Castor and Pollux, are here at all times. They present their homages to you, and blandly propose that we adopt them—the flaxen and not wholly guileless babes of twenty-seven.—I like, in short, to have the house full, and keep bachelor-hall; but how much better I should like my friends, the old house, the whole world, if there were a sweet and stately châtelaine here to help me do the honours.

Ah, Ilse, when do I not wish for you! Where do I not need you! If you were riding by my side these frosty, dusky mornings, what sunshine would glow in my heart, and how my cottages

would grow, and how like magic the men would work, hammering, after one smile from you, like great Thor himself. And while I am busy with the stewards and their stupid accounts and papers, why should you not model to your heart's content, and be quite alone, and think and dream, as free and unmolested and happy as in Rome? And later in the day, there is so much to do, together or apart as we choose. There are your people, and the neighbours and old friends far and near, to whom we would ride: the villagers with their innumerable needs, and trustful fashion of seeking advice at the Schloss: the hosts of things I am doing and planning for them. There are the long evenings, with more time for music and reading than one ever finds in a city; yet with the best that cities can give—the results of their thought and work—in the new books and magazines constantly pouring in from Berlin, Paris, Rome, London, Boston, and New York, so that our quiet little island in the Baltic is in touch

with movement and progress everywhere, and, thanks to the world's sensitive nervous system nowadays, is enabled to rejoice and mourn with distant lands in instantaneous responsive sympathy. Think, too, of our well-loved guests, whose brains and hearts lend such a charm to fire-side chats, that midnight steals upon us un-awares, and we part reluctantly with spirits all aglow. Why is it not a good life, Ilse? "Parochial," do you say? I have thought much and gravely of that word since you used it in connection with yourself. A profane word, indeed, applied to the white northern Freia—most innocent goddess of love and youth—wandering, by some irony of fate, among their weary, world-worn Latin Venuses.

For myself, too, I disclaim it. I am not an iota more provincial than if I were handling wet clay a small portion of my time and flirting exhaustively in pretty women's boudoirs the remainder. In one sense we are all parochial, and

this little planet itself, I presume, in comparison with the vaster and more metropolitan interests of the universe.

But one thing is sure, Ilse—it all depends upon a man's mental attitude, not upon where he happens to spend his days. There are circles, so-called best circles too, in the largest cities, where men's motives and daily routine become pitifully mean, and stereotyped, and small as in the smallest hamlet. It is always the same houses, the same clubs, the same gossip revamped from year to year. What does it matter whether in Paris or London, Berlin or Rome? I am glad of my six weeks of army life twice a year. That keeps me in training, and holds good old associations warm. I am glad, too, that my wheat, rye, hay, cattle, machines, and other delectable things, to the level of which you are not yet educated, call me to the city often, and that I must make certain visits, and meet certain men, in society as on the stock exchange, and can hear some good

music and an occasional *première* at the theatre. I like it all for awhile, but when I come away I breathe freer. And so, perhaps I am parochial, after all, and if I am, I don't care. Names never frightened me much.

For I love Jaromar every inch, and Jaromar loves me, and lets me tyrannize unblushingly over it, and I am proud to be Odo, by the Grace of God, King of Jaromar. A small kingdom, indeed, but large enough to absorb a man's best brain and heart and strength, and one that I long to leave better, happier, and healthier than I found it—its lands, its men and women and children. And when you come at last, beloved, to be near me, to help me with your insight, your counsel, your sweetness, your lighter, sunnier nature, to give me all that I need and crave in this or any other world, then I shall be so strong and glad that I can do all I would for my people, the work of ten mighty men, huge as the giants of old that lie buried in my park. For I am lonely without

you, Ilse, and perplexed and desperate and morose at times, more than you suspect.

I cannot always speak of it. To what end? We have chosen our course. But, indeed, indeed, I love you with all my strength, and I need you, and long for you by day and by night, and hunger for your return unceasingly.

Surely it is worth living, the life we could live together? And all that you hold dear and beautiful I would respect. Must you, then, go so far, so far, for your art? If it is worth anything, is it not here too? Is it not everywhere? The other day it was so mild, the fishermen sat in the afternoon sunshine along the wall on the shore, and I watched them with a heart-ache, and thought, "Why does she not care for these splendid fellows? Why must she have Romans?" Old Martin went by with his closed lids and outstretched, groping hands. Forty years stone-blind, and once the most dare-devil sailor on the bay. And I thought, "Has she seen anything in Rome more

wonderful than the infinite resignation of that old man's mouth?"

But wherever I go, whatever, whomever I see, I am always seeing only you, talking only to you, trying to convince you that home is best. When I ride under our ancient Hertha-beeches and thousand-year-old oaks stretching their huge bare black shapes against the wintry sky, I call to you, "O Ilse, how can you care more for their cypresses and ilexes than for these mighty trees, beneath which those old heathen, our fierce Wend forefathers, sacrificed to their strange Slavic gods, after slaughtering the Germanic Rügier, and seizing their beautiful fertile island. Do you not weary for our great white chalk cliffs towering from blue waters, and for the rolling dunes? And have we not history and tradition enough, Runic stones, legends and fairy lore, tales of demon and sprite, sunken palaces, buried cities, hidden treasures, and amber-gods—magic, mystery, and poetry everywhere? Had they haughtier races in

Rome than our old sea kings?" So I plead with you, and it is all futile, for if you do not want to come, I do not—no, no, it is not true. God help me, I would often have you come, whether you want to or not!

Ilse, think, if you were ever restless here, there is always my yacht. At a word from you, how quickly we could fly away, to Copenhagen, to the North Cape, to Iceland, England—wherever you would. Often when the *Northwind* is skimming along like a bird, I have longed to swoop southward like a Viking, land somewhere with a few trusty men, seize you in Rome, and bear you away in triumph—an inspiring dream, and not parochial, Ilse. Another dream, less romantic and picturesque, but more comforting to me, is that after you of your own free will come home to Jaromar, then I, of my own free will, would later go down to Rome with you. Why not? I could not now; I would not, and—*I must not*. But then, you would see, I should be very good,

truth a man of sense, or the veriest fool, the most egregious ass that the Lord ever made. Sometimes—

It is well that a man has his daily work to do, though he may now and then grumble and rail at it. To-day, as usual, I rose at half-past five and rode out at six. Even if there is at this season no important field work to summon me, there is enough in general going on, and I see no reason to change my habits, especially as my building projects interest me greatly, and the mild winter permits us to make good progress. I hope to see my model English cottages roofed and plastered before the snow comes; then I shall leave them to dry. After my coffee at eight, I am engaged the entire morning in my study with correspondence, business of all kinds, the reports of my stewards and others, as well as various embassies from the village. I often smile to find myself sitting here like an octogenarian patriarch, gravely responding to appeals of the most delicate

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and amazingly appreciative and sympathetic, and I should not be in the way at all. I would be as docile as one of your little graven images, and we would stay a few months, and then we would come home to Jaromar right joyfully—and together.

Odo.

XII.

From the Countess to Count von Jaromar.

PALAZZO MALASPINA,

January 9th.

What a charming surprise. Imagine it, Odo. My little room is full of flowers—roses—roses—roses—red, white, and yellow. I came in out of the glare, for it is a scirocco day, after an early stroll on the Pincio, and here I am, like a nested bird—the only difference being that if I were a bird, I would sing out my small soul right blithely, while, as it is, I only hum to myself that dear, sleepy, humdrum, altogether delightful

nursery song we used to sing as children on Sunday evenings at Jaromar, "O schöne, schöne Blümchen, Ein Blümchen auch mein Herz!" Ah, human angels, as Jean Paul says, have no grand names; though, indeed, Röhrich is not such a bad name even for an angel. What kind friends they are! I know how it is. I happened to say at dinner last night that I loved roses at all times, of course, but that at the approach of winter I loved them tenfold. And these are such beautiful ones. I wonder where the Röhrichs got them. Those yellow blooms are Fiori di Monica, exquisite things with an indescribable fragrance, that are said to grow in August in the Pope's gardens beyond the Alban Lake. Flowers do make me so happy. I have a charming idea: I shall carve two lovely little ivory figures, one "Rose," and the other "Lily," and make each the very spirit of the flower it stands for. What a joy it will be to me to do this. But I am not going to restrict myself to carving in ivory. Next

week I am to model, under Herwegh's tuition, on a large scale. The other day I was driving with my friend on the Campagna, beyond the Porta Furba, and some miles out, just where the Claudian aqueduct sinks like a reef in an incoming tide, I noticed, under a broken arch, the loveliest boy I have ever seen. He was a young shepherd, and was clad in goatskin; but his legs were bare, and his brown throat. His large black eyes were ever so much lovelier than those of Lucrezia Mallerini, and he had that thickly-clustered black hair which is so like the heavy masses of the fruit of the hedge-ivy. He rose slowly, stretched himself, gave a long, shrill cry to his scraggy sheep, and then moved out of sight behind one of the aqueduct's ruined arches. I heard him singing softly to himself as he went, and could just catch—

“O bell—l—la!

B'la—a tal—ya—a

E'ssima”

and then, with a sudden, deeper note—

“Al mio, al mio, al mio cuore!”

And he certainly went to *my* heart, the beautiful boy. I tell you all this because I have decided to model a life-size statue of him, as I saw him when he had risen, and had thrown back his head with a panther-like grace, while he gave his strange shepherding cry. Herwegh has undertaken to secure him for me as a model; I hope he may be successful. If so, I shall begin next Monday, and at Herwegh's studio, of course. I am so excited about it. If I succeed in modelling in the clay in life-size, I shall make a replica in terracotta to send to the Salon in Paris! No! I am not yet an Immortal condescending to a Mortal! Now, don't laugh, Odo; for though I am laughing myself at my own folly, I wish you to sympathize with me with all your heart and soul.

I have stopped writing for five minutes, and

what do you think for? I could not resist those roses. I have made a wreath of those deep crimson ones, the Hearts o' Love, and crowned myself therewith, and I have pinned the Fiori di Monica in clusters about my neck till I am like another Clytie; and as for the others, each as lovely and fragrant as though this were the birthday of June, here they are all lying in my lap in the most delicious confusion. My lips are wet with their cool dew. Ah, I must sing you that wild Spanish song I promised to translate for you. I have learned the native tune of it, a strange half-savage, lifting, falling, rising kind of chant, wilder than the words. It is gipsy music, and one can hear their fierce pulse beating through the haunting melody, so unlike anything I know.

“Roses, roses,
Yellow and red;
A rose for the living,
A rose for the dead!
Who'll sip their dew?

There are only a few
Of the yellow and red;
Youth sells its roses
Ere youth is sped.

Roses, roses,
All for delight;
What of the night?
Hark, the tramp, tramp,
The scabbard's clamp,
The flaring lamp!
Where is the morning dew?
Ah, only a few
Drank ere the yellow and red
Lay shrivelled, shrivelled,
Over the dead.

Roses, roses,
Buy, oh, buy.
The years fly,
'Tis the time of roses.
Here are posies
For one and all,
For lovers that sigh
And for lovers that die;
And for love's pall
And burial!

Roses, roses, roses, buy, buy, oh, buy!
Why delay, why delay, roses also die.

Pink and yellow, blood-red, snow-white.
Roses for dayspring, roses for night!

Buy, buy, oh, my roses buy!
A kiss for a kiss, and a sigh for a sigh!"

There, now, if you do not say something nice to me for that, I shall never, never sing to you again!

Addio, dear Odo; I am so happy. How I love Rome!

Ever your affectionate

ILSE.

P.S.—I forgot to say that I now see my way to keeping myself! Besides, I see how I can reduce my expenses by at least four *lire* a day. I have made an arrangement at a Trattoria in the Via Capo le Case close by. Lilien Röhrich, who has just looked in, is amused at my carefulness. She says I shall make a capital *Hausfrau*! What do you say to that, Odo? I must close; I am going out with her. She envies me my wealth

of roses, and can't think where they come from. In this mystery I am going to fall back on His Holiness the Pope!

A good thick letter from you has this moment come. I cannot stop to open it, for Lilien is waiting.

XIII.

From the Count to the Countess von Jaromar.

SCHLOSS JAROMAR,

December 7.

MY DEAREST ILSE,—

I am going to ask you to cease your pretty poetic soarings for a while, and scrutinize more closely the somewhat miry ground beneath your feet. I have thus far refrained from expressing my opinion of your associates. In the first place, you have not requested it; in the second, I shrank from the *rôle* of Cassandra. Then I trusted you boundlessly. You are clever, sensitive, and good. To such as you, slimy things do not cling.

“Wem Gott will rechte Gunst erweisen,
Den schickt er in die weite Welt,”

said the poet, and, I fancy, foresaw your case. Why should you not meet and know all sorts of people? You would inevitably be confronted with unpleasant experiences, but why not, I reasoned? Why should a woman not make the best of them and learn from them as a man does—or at least ought? The time is past when we wrapped her in cotton-wool, and believed that if a breath of gossip blew upon her, her reputation was irretrievably tarnished. Only tinsel tarnishes so easily. Pure gold can bear rough handling. Reputations are happily nowadays less fragile and anæmic than formerly. They meet many ill-winds, yet remain strong, sound, and sweet. It is not then from motives of narrow conventional caution that I speak. This I think you will believe.

Ilse, little Ilschen, dear little girl—you are so appallingly clever, you dance about so alluringly

in your letters, you are so literary, so artistic, that I don't pretend to keep pace with you at all. Every moment the dainty kaleidoscope presents new colours and new forms. Yet one underlying truth is clear to me. You are, in spite of your cleverness, only a little girl, after all. This touches, comforts, and makes me anxious all at once.

I have to-day read and re-read all your letters. I have followed every step of your way in Rome, and considered you and your surroundings as unselfishly and as accurately as my mental machinery permits—with this result: you seem to me a lovely innocent-eyed child smiling serenely at bandits.

You may retort that I am prejudiced. To a certain degree, I no doubt am. Let us discount that. You may even add that I am jealous. I don't pose for a disembodied spirit. I am a very human man thirty years old and I love you. Hence certain incidents in your career do not

have precisely the effect of a lullaby on my emotions. Let us discount then as much as you please for vague heavy discontent and suspicions, when not actual Othello-moods. But after all my limitations are deducted, there still remains in my favour a solid modicum of common sense upon which I base my remarks.

I don't like Herwegh. I didn't like him in your first letter, but I acknowledged your sovereign right to choose your friends. The Röhrichs and the Heideloffs are amiable nonentities, not a little selfish and cowardly, as are most out-and-out society people. They do not dare to tell you what they see quite clearly. They shrug their shoulders and say, "After all, why should we burn our fingers? It is life, and Countess Ilse is not an infant-in-arms. She would not thank us for interfering. If she did not seek adventures, she would have Count Jaromar with her." Forgive me, dear. You know what *I* think, but the world thinks otherwise. It does *not* respect

your motives. It refuses to believe that you and I are loyal friends, although separated by two thousand miles. The world's opinion is in itself unimportant, but when one braves it *tête baissée*, as you are braving it now, one usually wants a good reason. However, it is not on account of the world or for my sake that I make this appeal, but purely to save you from annoyance, which it requires no gift of prophecy to see threatening you.

Your Mallerini ghouls do not disturb me. They stride about like gloomy stage-villains in mantles, doing a great deal of glittering eye-business, but not much else. If this inactivity pleases the noble Cesare under existing circumstances, that is his affair. I don't pretend to understand Italians; but I understand Friedrich Herwegh uncommonly well. He is not playing a fair game with you. He cannot play a fair game with any woman. Perhaps he could once, but he cannot now. He has become altogether too picturesquely

erotic. It is almost inconceivable that a woman who sees every flitting *nuance* in sunset clouds, every microscopic wrinkle beneath the lower eyelid of a beautiful visitor, should be blind to facts as conspicuous as the Coliseum. It may be the innate depravity of my sex that renders us more clear-sighted in this turbulent province of human affairs; for believe me, any man, the dullest, would have long ago perceived what you airily and blissfully ignore. Men's souls will require a sublimating process for a few centuries yet, before they arrive at woman's bland unconsciousness of evil. It almost reconverts me to the medieval idea of woman's inability to stand alone. Badinage aside—Ilse, dear girl, it makes me long to protect you, yet I know when once your attention is aroused, you will not need me, you will protect yourself. Not that there is any positive danger, but most assuredly there is the possibility of extremely unpleasant complications. In fact, your conduct and your obliviousness invite them. They

can scarcely fail to respond. Permit me one practical suggestion. Surely Herwegh's studio is not essential to your art work? I am aware, of course, that you are conventionally guarded there, that there are other students, but there is but one Ilse, and I know better than you what is passing in Herwegh's mind.

Dear, sweet, lovely, reckless Ilse, putting aside the fateful facts that you are a woman, after all, and my beloved wife, there are still other reasons why what I say ought to have some weight with you; for if you were a man and my friend, if I cared for your happiness, and remembered your youth, I should, without fear of offence, say, "Better not be too intimate with these people. They are slippery. Honest men are better companions in the long run." So do not think me presuming, or arrogant, or "mannish," as you used to say so indignantly. If I were silent now, I should commit a crime. Sweetheart, don't go to Herwegh's studio. Don't flatter him so far.

Don't encourage him. Of course I know, and you knew, it was he who filled your bower with roses. I may not like that much because I don't like him, but it is, after all, a trifle—a mere passing attention. Why then make a mystery of it? You observe I do not say, "Avoid him completely." Why should you, indeed? He is a good authority, and stimulating to your work. Use him then as an artist, but leave the man to his Mallerini and other flames. There, I have spoken, and plainly enough. Believe me, trust me, not because I am your husband, but because I would give my heart's blood for your happiness, and am your friend,

Your loving, loyal

ODO.

Dearest, could you not come home for Christmas? May I not come for you, or meet you? You would not lose many days, and letters are wretched things, worse than ever just now. All

would be sunny and clear again. And the joy! It takes away my breath—the mere thought of it! And you could go back immediately. Will you not consider it in all its bearings? Ah, Ilse! Ilse! *come!*

XIV.

From the Countess to Count von Jaromar.

PALAZZO MALASPINA,

December 11.

No, no, no, a hundred times no! How foolish you are! It does seem to me so extraordinary that you cannot, or will not, understand. Why should I not see so much of Friedrich Herwegh? He is one of the best and kindest of friends. I can't tell you how much I owe to him. And now that I go to his studio five mornings in the week, I seem to be learning my art by *strides*. Of *course* he means much to me. Why shouldn't he? I am the better every hour of the day for his help and guidance; and he is so entertaining,

Besides, I have found the earnest side of him. He sees not only that I am not a woman of the kind he is accustomed to meet, but that he has been mistaken in his common attitude towards women generally. He told me this himself. He has very fine qualities. Now, why should you wish me to be without such a friend? I am likely to get nothing but good from him, while I am not at all sure of the benefits of association with the Mallerinis; and yet you do not warn me against *them*.

I hate these misunderstandings; but I am not to blame. No, Odo, I am not in the least anxious to be at home at Christmas. If it is a fine day, we (that is, the Heideloffs, a Mr. Graeme, an English artist, with his young wife, and Herwegh, and I) think of going to St. John Lateran, to hear and see High Mass celebrated by Cardinal Fabrizzi, and then of going by carriage to Marino, and of walking thence to Castel Gandolfo, and then on by the ilex-avenues to Albano, where

we shall dine, and then drive home across the Campagna.

I am looking forward to it immensely. The North seems to me very chilly and gloomy.

But I'll think of you at Jaromar, and drink your health in the pleasant *vino de Velletri*; but only if you are good, and if I have another and pleasanter letter before Christmastide. I am much perturbed about your letter. I do wish you were not always thinking of me. Surely we can be husband and wife, and yet not always fidgeting about each other. I am not a child.

And now, pray, *per amor di Dio*, do not conclude that I do not love you, or that I am drifting away from you, because I speak what is in my mind. I cannot work when I am perturbed. I have lost my precious morning, and I don't know what Herwegh will say to me.

But I won't scold you any more just now. What glorious sunbathed days we are having. It

is probably drip-drip-dripping, or snowing, or freezing, at Jaromar. Ugh! I shiver.

Your affectionate

ILSE.

XV.

From the same to the same.

PALAZZO MALASPINA,

December 14.

DEAR FRIEND,—

I am so happy to-day. It seems, as I sit here at my open window, and with my doves (I call them mine, for three of them have grown quite tame, and come often to my window to be fed and stroked) flying backward and forward against the beautiful intense blue of the sky, that into this warm Roman air, wherein, alas, garlic, and what my trim Lisa calls “pitiable odours,” mingle with delicious fragrances from a small roof-garden that would be below me if my house were to make “a reverence” towards His Holi-

ness over the way—say for ten yards. “O Ilse, that full stop!” you will exclaim; but, *caro mio*, the sentence was so long, and, moreover, I wanted to tell you that I can hear the splash-splash of the great fountain in the Piazza di Spagna—another faint echo-splash, I do believe, from either the Fontana di Accademia or the Tritone (for I don’t know which way the wind is), and a delicious gurg-gurgling from our dear, ridiculous, puffy, impossible bronze river-god in the court below me. This gladness of falling water everywhere in Rome makes me so happy. It is like children’s joyous laughter floating across one of our old north-country graveyards. But, there, what a hopeless person I am; I shall never get on with my sentence. And no wonder, you would say, if you could see me and my surroundings for a moment. Such a delightful fancy seized me this morning—to model a little Spirit of Fruit. To this end (“O deceitful Ilse! I know too well your insatiable love of fruit for you to

deceive me by so palpable a ruse," you will cry—but unjustly!) I have expended—no, I won't tell you how many *lire*, upon a beautiful heap—it is not only the best word, but the *only* word—of blood-red, dark purple, dusky yellow, and pale green grapes, large, violet-hued plums, some long, thin jargonelles, a pile of delicious country-bumpkin-looking apples, some trying to be all sunny-yellow or gold, and others literally swelling with ruddy pride, and, lastly, about a dozen large divided pomegranates, so full of wine-dark juice as to look like cocoanut-cups filled with claret and bruised rasps. I bought the pomegranates yesterday from an old woman who has a broken-down, rickety fruit-stall close to the Trevi fountain, near the Trajan Forum. She was amazed at a *Signorina da cielo* buying so many of these bulky pomegranates, and insisted upon sending them by her (invisible) grandson, till I explained that I had my little carriage close by. She called me "her daughter," a "heavenly angel" (which,

by the way, was a neat compliment to herself too!), a "blessed Signorina, whom all the Saints would, or should (I forget which) protect for ever," her "generous and noble benefactor," and I don't know what else.

* * * * *

This line represents a blank of three hours. I have been lunching with some friends, people I met when I was at the Hotel d'Italia. What a noble work, that head of Juno, at the Ludovisi! Oh, dear me, what a child I feel when I am beside some of these superb creations of the old Greek sculptors. I grow so despondent that—that—well, that I feel fit only for the company of Charlotte Bodenfels. I am glad you snubbed her as you did. What an intolerable woman she is, how intolerable her kind!

But, my dear Odo, this brings me to something I wanted to say to you. She wrote me the other day, very unwarrantably, of course, of "Margot." If for no other reason than that the

world, and at present I mean by this liberal phrase only our own little world betwixt the heights of Ilsenstein and the forest reaches of Jaromar, always listens to the gossip of the Charlottes whom you and I dislike so much, even when it pretends to condemn and discredit; if for no other reason than this, I do think it would be advisable, from every point of view, that your *protégée* should now leave the Schloss. It would be easy for you to find accommodation for her. I am sure that Parson Hiller and his good wife would take her in and be kind to her, till news from her home come, which, for the girl's own sake, I trust will be soon.

Then, again, I put it to you frankly: is it—is it—*O Dio mio*, what word is it I want?—well, is it quite *seemly* for Mlle. Borike to settle down at Jaromar as if it were to be her home for ever? Even dear, stupid old Walpurga must see that it is now time her beloved Margot took flight again—like all other wind-blown things.

Seriously, Odo, I ask you to consider and, indeed, to meet my wishes in this matter. You will do me the justice to believe that I urge my plea in all good faith.

In haste, or I shall miss the post,

ILSE.

P.S.—If Malzahn and Freolin are with you, and you are expecting other men at the Schloss, all the more reason for doing *at once* what I now urgently beg of you.

XVI.

From the Count to the Countess von Jaromar.

SCHLOSS JAROMAR,

December 18.

DEAREST ILSE,—

Margot will remain. I regret not to be able to meet your wishes, but the “wind-blown thing” has taken root. As to the question of propriety, whether it is, as you say, “seemly” for her to be

here, I broke into "Homeric laughter" at the inconceivable *naïveté* of this solicitude—for us—on your part. I don't pretend that it was happy mirth, or lasted long. But pardon me for retorting that your request is, under existing circumstances, deliciously droll, and I should be considerably more amused by it if it did not also make me sad—and savage.

Where was your sense of humour wandering when you wrote this letter? Surely that, if nothing else, ought to have prevented it. Consider, Ilse. Shall there be liberty, equality, fraternity for you and your satellites, and none at all for Margot and me? Since when has so obsequious a regard for conventionalities dwarfed your judgment, your courage, and, pardon me, your generosity? And if Charlotte Bodenfels is the guardian of our honour and domestic peace, our counsellor and guide, perhaps it would be instructive for you to know what tales she has sown broadcast over the country, obtained from

some correspondent in Rome who saw you at the Hotel d'Italia, and apparently concentrates all her energies upon chronicling your movements, real and imaginary. I have not sullied your ears with these things. I did not care enough about them to resent them. A beautiful woman alone must always be a mystery, and while envy traduces what she does, it longs still more to annihilate what she is, her inherent charm, her very existence, for therein lies her real offence. There is nothing surprising in the fact that they find your ways problematic and incomprehensible, and that they discover impropriety in all that you do, in what is good and innocent, as well as in that which is equivocal. For this I am prepared, but scarcely that you, revelling in your own "freedom," should desire to restrict mine.

Ah, Ilse, recrimination is not good between you and me. No doubt I am, as usual, taking things too seriously. You don't really care much about anything that happens here. I might as

well expostulate with a humming-bird. Why should I find fault when neither my praise nor blame, my warnings nor entreaties move you, and by the time this reaches you, you will have completely forgotten your scruples about Margot, due indeed to but a passing mood. They would never have been uttered, I know, had you had the faintest conception of the real state of affairs.

You consciously and deliberately dare the world's prejudices. I have said, and still say—*still*, Ilse—that you have a right to do this, to seek your own, to select your own pursuits, to be yourself, to be “free.” But Margot is different. If I could command your attention long enough, I would try to show you how. She has no theories, no aims, no longing for liberty. She is so simple that it does not even occur to her that she has not freedom enough. She does not defy or dare anything. She is an old-fashioned girl, a home-child. Fate deprived her of one home

and gave her another. It would be a dastardly thing to turn her off because old fools like to chatter. The sea gave her to me. That night I seized her myself and dragged her into the boat, and afterwards when we found that there was life in her still, Malte and I drew the little thing away from her dead father and mother, and brought her up here, and I carried her in my arms across my threshold.

And here she shall stay as long as she likes. Not even for you will I send her away, and whoever harms her has to reckon with me. But be very sure, nobody will harm her. That she is a lovely girl, seventeen years old, I and others, having eyes, perceive; but also that she claims in a peculiarly sacred way the protection of my house.

In the village where the little "Ma'm'selle" is as welcome as sunshine, among my guests who only see her flitting by, but accord to her the deference due to a daughter of the house, no one

is so careless as to forget under what circumstances she was tossed upon our shores. And Ilse, dearest, this you will have to concede, it is not Margot's fault, or mine, that there is no chaperon for her here. It would break her heart to know you wish to send her away, for she worships you. She contemplates your picture with mute and tender adoration, such as she gives her own Sainte Marguerite. Every day she brings you offerings of fresh flowers, and I suspect she says her prayers to you. Poor little benighted girl, how can she! ODO.

XVII.

From the Countess to Count von Jaromar.

PALAZZO MALASPINA,

December 22.

DEAR ODO,—

My plans for Christmas are all changed. Cesare Mallerini's brother, Egidio, is coming from Paris with his French wife, and *il Conte* is going

to keep open house at his villa near l'Ariccia, between Albano and Nemi, in the Albans. It is an unusual thing for an Italian to do; but it will be interesting. The Röhrichs are going for a week, and I with them. I believe that Herwegh will be the only other foreigner. We leave Rome to-morrow. I cannot imagine Christmas in the Villa Mallerini. Fancy Count Cesare as a convivial host! Nevertheless, I am looking forward to the visit with eager curiosity; even the Röhrichs are curious.

Lebe wohl, my friend, a hundred happy Christmases to you; I am too busy to write more just now; forgive so brief a note; I kiss my love to Jaromar.

In great haste,

Your busy and excited,

ILSE VON JAROMAR.

P.S.—If you write to me a day or two after Christmas, address your letter to La Contessa Ilse von Jaromar, Villa Mallerini, l'Ariccia, per Albano.

XVIII.

From the same to the same.

VILLA MALLERINI,
Christmas Morning.

“Noël, Noël,
Belle Louise!
C’est moi,
Belle Louise!

Sst! Sst!
Dans le parc,
Par le lac,
Sur les prés,
Siffle la brise!

Pfiss—pfiss!
Fiss—Fiss!
Au ciel
La—ra—la!
Aux montagnes
Ha, Ha, Ha,
Chante la brise!

“Où sont les neiges,
Belle Louise?
Voyez ma tête,
Belle Louise,

Ha! Ha! Ha!
Car c'est moi,
Belle Louise,
Car c'est moi,
C'est Noël!"

It was so lovely this morning, that away I went before breakfast, and literally danced down the solemn ilex avenue that leads from the house to the terrace on the higher ground called the Buonavista. And, oh, what a view! I saw all the Campagna bathed in living blue light, delicate beyond words, and purple only where the Maremma lay leagues long against the sea. The latter was quite visible, a wavering, dilating, contracting, receding, advancing band, of the most extraordinarily vivid and brilliant pale-green. I am sure that nowhere else in the world did anyone see a lovelier Christmas morning. It was so warm and bright, too. Over a mass of the beautiful pink and white Fiori di Natale a great yellow and orange tiger-moth tried to pass himself off as a butterfly. I chased it for a dozen yards or more,

and then it gave a scornful tilt to its wings, and swung upward into the shadow of a great stone-pine. Then I went and looked over the terrace wall, beyond which runs one of the many charcoal-burners' paths that intersect all the woodlands hereabout. A muleteer was passing, with his four-footed companion stalking along beneath what seemed to me a ridiculously impossible load of faggots, which literally let only the head and wriggly, hairless tail be visible. I could not help calling out, "*Buon' giorno, Signore! Fa bel tempo!*" The roguish fellow gave me greeting for greeting, and then suddenly burst into a wild song, which, so far as I could make out, consisted of endless *stellas* and *bellas*, and *carrissimas* and *benissimas*. But when the rascal plumped on his knees, and kissed both his hands frantically, and called upon me by all the saints in heaven to have pity on him, for all the world like the melodramatic *tenore* in that ridiculous opera we saw together in Berlin, I could no longer restrain my

laughter, but shrank behind the terrace literally convulsed. Then suddenly—no, Odo, no hairbreadth escape, no startling episode, but simply your very earthly and commonplace Ilse became most unromantically hungry! I tried hard to look across that glorious Campagna, with all its innumerable hollows brimming over with pale blue mist, and to think of the Fatherland far away beyond the unseen Apennines, and of distant Jaromar, and of you, and to imagine that I heard the bells ringing, and all the villagers and fisherfolk hurrying to hear good Pastor Hiller say again just the same things he said last year, and for thirty odd years before, and—and—*of everything*, but, alas! the flesh prevailed!

So ignominiously I fled back, singing as I went my blithe French song, the words and gay tripping tune of which I picked up lately; I scarce know how. Perhaps you can guess the time if you read the nonsensical linelets quickly and lightly.

I had just sung out (and, I'm ashamed to say, at the pitch of my voice)—

“Ha! Ha! Ha!
Car c'est moi,
Belle Louise,
Car c'est moi,
C'est Noël!”

when I came full tilt upon two sombre-looking, scandalized priests, or rather one of them was a bare-footed, unkempt, cowed Franciscan monk. They positively scowled upon me, as though they were a couple of heaven-rewarded St. Anthonys, and I were the reprehensible siren who had almost caused them to fall into backsliding, and the consequent pit! At the first glance I did not see that Cesare Mallerini was with them. What an ungracious fellow he is! He bowed coldly in response to my salutation, and when I laughingly added something about Christmas, he gave a side-long glance at his priestly companions, and very rudely muttered that in Italy *il giorno di Natale* was a day for religion, and not for keeping car-

nival. I like him less and less, I admit. Even when he is most polite, there is a cruel look in his eyes, a sneer on his lips.

Well, Christmas morning at any rate has gone happily. I have had my breath of fresh air, my breakfast, and my conscience is clear in having written this letter to you. We are now going for a drive over to Castel Gandolfo and Marino, and back by the low road to Cecchina, and thence home again by Genzano. It will be charming. You can think of me singing my little De Musset song that my friends here like so much, even if you do prefer Horace!

*“Le remède
Au mélancolique
C’est la musique
Et la beauté!”*

And Herwegh is to bring his guitar, and has promised to sing *canzoni* and *rispetti* of every province in Italy, with all the peculiar words and accents, Venetian, Tuscan, Sicilian, Calabrian, and so forth. You would smile if you saw the turn-

out; the carriage is an ancient *chaise-de-luxe*, and one of the two horses is a rusty black, while the other is a piebald! Oh, dear me, is it wicked to laugh at things as I do?

But I'll leave this open in case the Roman post comes in before we go out for our drive.

XIX.

From the same to the same.

VILLA MALLERINI,

L'ARRICCIA,

December 26.

MY DEAR ODO,—

What a wild night it is! I can easily imagine myself at Jaromar, or by the forlornest shores of our native north. The wind that sweeps howling up from the Campagna might be that which hurls its sleet against the windows of our Schloss. I am so restless. I cannot sleep; I cannot read; I doubt if I can even write long. What a melancholy place this is! It is difficult to believe that

I am in Italy. Christmas day was so gloriously bright and warm; I even heard an unwary thrush trying over one of its lost April songs. Poor thing, it failed miserably. What did it think to-day, I wonder, when the sky grew grey and then sooty-brown, and a chill sighing wind moaned up from the Maremma! I wish you were here, Odo. Everything seems to have gone wrong to-day. After dinner, the violence of the gale was so great, that we all instinctively spoke in lowered tones. The only person who affected cheerfulness was Herwegh, but I must say he did not succeed. Even his good spirits were damped after a while; to my relief, for he did not seem himself. It was a *horrid* meal. Lilien Röhrich had her dinner in her own apartment, as she had a headache, and her husband was absent, having gone to Rome for the night. The other Christmas guests have left. At the table there were only our two hosts, Egidio Mallerini and his wife Aurore, Herwegh and myself. Long before the meal was over we had

subsided into complete silence. Cesare Mallerini stared straight before him, a stony glitter in his eyes. Lucrezia sat back, even more frozen, if possible. I could not see her eyes, as she never raised them, or only so swiftly that they evaded my searching glance. Egidio and his wife were as impassive as practicable without obstrusive rudeness. As for Herwegh, after his collapse he was as reticent as the rest of us. Unfortunately, we were at opposite sides of the table, and so could do nothing to relieve the strain. It was scarce better when we were in the *salon*. I was asked to sing, but had not the spirit for it. Lucrezia chillily declined. Madame Aurore indulged us with some Parisian school-girl music, for all the world like a company of bats shrilling and gibbering. She tortured these poor high notes till—but there, never mind her; I daresay she pleased Signor Egidio. I wonder what is the matter. Perhaps the brothers have fallen out—or their wives. Perhaps it is all due to a matri-

monial quarrel. Perhaps Cesare and Herwegh have began hostilities. What makes me think that this guess may be near the mark is that he (Herwegh) did not speak to his hostess after we went into the drawing-room. Yet her eyes watched him like a cat's! Altogether, this is a fitting end to a wretched evening. I meant to write you a long letter about our Christmas doings, but I find myself quite unable. We *had*, however, ample entertainment, though it is only fair to Herwegh to add that without him we should have found the hours, particularly in the afternoon and evening, somewhat heavy. It would be absurd to term either of the Mallerinis genial, but they were courteously agreeable. My hostess even went so far as to call me Ilse (which she pronounces deliberately), and to ask me to address her as Lucrezia. But I've forgotten all about Christmas by this time, and can think only of this forbidding day, this sullen evening, this dreary eerie night, which makes me so nervous.

I wonder if it is another such night with you. I wish Jaromar were not so far away. I feel more *alone* to-night than I have ever done in my life. I wonder if I were to call you, Odo, would you come to me? If I were to . . .

P.S.

PALAZZO MALASPINA, ROME,
December 27.

You will, to your amazement, see by this P.S. that I am at home again! I was just about to tear up the foregoing unfinished letter, but I leave it as it is. It will help to explain.

Read the last sentence of it again, and then imagine me dropping my pen in sudden sickening affright, and calling out I know not what! For just as I was wondering idly if you would come at my summons I looked up. The door had silently opened, and a tall white figure stood in the semi-darkness. But though an indescribable fear possessed me for a moment, I saw at a glance that it was Lucrezia Mallerini. Yet I was almost

as unnerved when I recognized that woman as when I thought, for the breath of a second, that my prayer had been answered by the dead. She had a most evil look on her face. It was deadly pale, and her eyes were like luminous jet. At last I rose very slowly, and then, having regained my control, spoke. "Well, Contessa, do you wish to speak to me? I did not hear you knock." She did not answer, but stood looking fixedly at me, and then let her gaze wander round and round the room. At last she moved. Having closed my door, she crossed to that of the small dressing-room, raised a small lamp from a side-table so as to examine the interior. Naturally, I concluded that she was suspicious of eavesdroppers, though I was quite unable to guess what she wanted to confide to me. The rain slapped the window panes viciously, and in every hole and corner of that old house the wind howled or shrieked or moaned. Her first words, uttered in a savagely ironical tone, startled me. "When

are you going back to Rome? To-night?" I admit that I at once jumped to the conclusion she was mad, yet as she had no appearance of frenzy, I had no other course than to treat her as though she were not. "If you wish to be relieved of my company, Contessa Mallerini," I exclaimed, "you may be sure that I will not long inconvenience you. But, obviously, I can scarce leave this solitary place on such a night as this." Strangely enough, my answer seemed to suit her. Her tense look relaxed somewhat, and she even made a slightly deprecating motion with her right hand. "Excuse me," was, however, all she said, and in a cold, formal way. I waited, at first patiently, and then impatiently. The wind had a wail in it that made me shiver, and I felt as though the very stones of the wall must be soaked with the steady *slush-slush* of the rain. "Did you hear the noise?" she asked me suddenly. "What noise?" I demanded, listening intently, and startled by her question. "The shots, half an hour ago."

“Shots! no, I heard none. If there were any I should not have recognized them in this wild night.” After that, another prolonged silence. I began to understand. Lucrezia was hysterically nervous; there was no doubt of it; she had been upset by the savage and unwonted violence of the gale. “I am going to bed,” I said, gently; “do you not think you would be wise to do the same?” “Yes, Signora, if you will permit me to rest *here*,” was her reply, in a strange voice and with a stranger parody of a smile. I pressed her to occupy my bed, but she refused. All she wanted was to sit in my large arm-chair. It was impossible for her, she said, to sleep during that tempest, and she felt better beside *me*, but she would feel still better if I were to go to bed and to sleep. At last I *did* lie down, though, not unnaturally, sleep, for all my weariness, would not come to me. After an hour or so I was, however, just about to doze off when, through my almost closed lids, I caught sight of Lucrezia

rising from her chair. She stealthily moved my letter to you till it was within the faint illumination from the corridor lamp, and then I saw her turn it over and read the beginning. I was so indignant that I almost sprang from my bed; then I nearly laughed at her chagrin, for she knows little or no German. But when she replaced my letter, she did not seem chagrined, only weary, and strained, and curiously intent. It must have been nearly an hour later when she suddenly rose again. This time she went to the window, and crouched behind the curtain. My heart beat, for I thought she *must* be mad. I knew that she was listening with all her nerves alive. But there was nothing, save the rising and falling wail of the wind, and the sudden flurry of sleety rain. I saw her lean forward and peer so intently that at last she almost touched the glass of the window. To my relief, after some minutes, she went back to her chair. I fancied she had fallen asleep at last, when I heard a sob. But as

absolute silence followed, I thought it best to take no notice. I must have dozed shortly after, for when I sat up with a start I saw she was no longer in the room. It was close on dawn when she returned. With the first dull gleam of day the wind abruptly ceased. I heard the rain still, but it was softly incessant, and had that trickling sound I used to get so weary of when it dripped among the lilacs under my window at Ilsenstein. I never can understand why people lie objectlessly. When Lucrezia rose once more she noticed that I was awake. "I am glad the storm is over, my friend," she began hesitatingly, and added, "but I have slept well, thanks to you. I dropped off to sleep as soon as you did, and it seems scarce five minutes ago." I felt contemptuous as well as angry, and made no effort to detain her. The night she passed certainly did not improve her. She looked wretchedly wan. That ivory skin of hers was quite yellow, and her dull black eyes were as lack-lustre as sodden coal. Well, I dressed

rapidly, and ere long was ready for breakfast. When it was brought to me, I found Ermerilda, the maid, exasperatingly reticent; but what I did gather made me decide to leave for Rome as soon as I decently could. It appeared that there was an accident last night. I could not understand Ermerilda's rapid and complicated explanations, and she simply would not, or could not, give me a direct answer. Count Cesare had been hurt, and was now seriously unwell, and in high fever. The Contessa was too distressed to appear, and wished to see *no one*. Signora, the other Contessa, was in bed; il Conte Egidio was with his brother. Signor Herwegh? Oh, *il Signor scultore* had—well, I really could make nothing out of that stupid Ermerilda; the only *approach* to information I could educe was that Herwegh, notwithstanding the fury of the tempest, had left the villa at midnight, and had returned to Rome. The girl was such a fool, or perhaps only pretended to be one—and Italian servants are so

exasperatingly secretive—that I fully expected to encounter him in the *salon* when I went downstairs. I didn't, however. Frau Röhrich I found in the most blissful ignorance of everything. She asked if we had had another delightful evening. I briefly explained why we had to leave at once: and, to be succinct, thus it is that I am at the Palazzo Malaspina again. I am too tired, and indeed too overwrought, to write any more just now. Of course, now, any letter will reach me after a tiresome delay, as it will have to be forwarded from l'Ariccia.

Addio, dear Odo.

ILSE.

XX.

From the Count to the Countess von Jaromar.

SCHLOSS JAROMAR,

January 9.

Could I hope to find anything here for which you still retain the faintest interest, dear Ilse, I would gladly write about it, but if you were in

the planet Mars there would hardly be less sympathy between us. We seem to breathe different atmospheres, speak different tongues, and, worst of all, think different thoughts. This is not complaint or reproach, but merely a temperate statement of facts. Your letters from the Villa Mallerini have come, and have produced, believe me, sufficient effect. I did not attempt to answer promptly, and I refrain now from superfluous and unwelcome comment, for I confess I don't understand your movements. I don't know what you are doing down there, what you want of those people, what you really think of them, what you perceive, or what you choose not to perceive. I have already given my views succinctly, and if they did not convince you, reiteration certainly will not. I may be in a bemuddled condition—groping in a dense fog, but I cannot think it. So I suppose I shall have to wait till you run your course, and stop of your own accord; and, meanwhile, general topics are safest.

Our Christmas festivities have given most of us, I trust, bright and happy days. Margot's amazement was boundless, as she had never even imagined a German Christmas, and was whirled breathlessly from one tree to another. Ours on Christmas Eve; your mamma's at Ilsenstein Christmas night; the school-children's, the twenty-sixth; the "Club's," the twenty-seventh; Baroness Freolin's, the twenty-eighth; Parson Hiller's, the twenty-ninth; and several small ones where we looked in for half an hour or so.

Batheldis von Freolin and Margot have become close friends. Batheldis comes here constantly, and they drive, ride, read, sing, and take long walks together. The baroness, being in the main a sensible, liberal woman, is pleased, as she ought to be, that her daughter has found so lovable a companion. But whether, in case her son and idol should seriously attempt to secure the lovable companion for himself, she would be equally free from social prejudice, I am by no

means sure. So I keep Freolin out of Margot's way, and experience all the anxiety of a prudent mamma, who spies an ineligible youth looming significantly upon her horizon. Freolin's phenomenal silence gives rise to the novel apprehension that he may actually be thinking. He's a good fellow, and I am as fond of him as if he were my brother, but he's been, so far, awfully gay—like most of us, I suppose—and Margot is so young. Why should she begin to have heartaches? Besides, I am in no haste to part with her. Later—who knows? Of course, I am not really attempting to regulate other people's heart affairs, but I am convinced merry, wholesome Batheldis is a better influence than her brother just at present for Margot, whose sorrow is still fresh and keen. Of this I am sure, Freolin will not advance a step in her direction without first talking with me. He cannot help his eloquent eyes, poor fellow, but she seems utterly unconscious of them thus far, and sees them rarely, I flatter myself.

Christmas Eve I missed her, and found her alone, out on the terrace in the moonlight.

"What are you doing out here in the cold, Margot?" I asked. "It's better sport to be moon-struck in June."

"I'm only listening to the waves," she replied quite brightly; but as we passed into my study it seemed to me there were tears in her eyes.

"Child, child, you must not be sad on Christmas Eve," I said; "that is forbidden by Act of Parliament."

"I'm not; at least, I am only happy-sad."

"Happy-sad?"

"Because it is all so beautiful and everybody is so kind to me, and my heart is so full, I had to run away and talk to—them."

I said nothing. Presently she went on:

"It is strange the waves took them from me, yet I always feel nearer them when the breakers fall loudest. But now I will go back to the others and be bright."

She smiled bravely, and suddenly added:

"You must not be sad either, Count Odo."

"I?" I returned, honestly surprised. "I flattered myself I had been conspicuously jolly."

She shook her head.

"Oh, no," she said, simply.

I stared at her in silence. What, indeed, could I say?

She turned quickly, holding out both hands to me with a warm and lovely impulse.

"You ought to be happy, you do so much good, you make so many people happier than they possibly could be without you. Then tonight, can you not be glad thinking how beautiful it will be next Christmas when Countess Ilse is here? She is far away, but it is not as if she were in another world, not as if she were never coming home and you could never hear her voice again. Can you not be a little glad, Count Odo?" she pleaded.

"You are a good girl, Margot," I exclaimed,

“and we are staunch friends, are we not? Now, since we have so many invulnerable reasons for being happy, let us go back and enjoy ourselves as hard as we can, and don’t trouble your little head about me—I’m all right.” But it touched me nevertheless—the child’s generous thought of me, even in her tender communion with her lost ones.

If her attempt at consolation was childlike, it was by no means ineffectual. I felt grateful for her goodness, her girlish frankness, and the hopefulness in her fresh voice. It did me a world of good to hear her speak your name freely and naturally, and allude to your return as a positive certainty. I was hungering for this, yet it is my own fault that nobody mentions you now. I have persistently discouraged all allusions to you, innocent and friendly ones as well as malicious. The truth is, sometimes I cannot speak of you, sometimes I will not, sometimes I could shout “Ilse” from the cliffs, and bless any wanderer on

the road if he would let me buttonhole him and talk about you for hours. And then I am furious with my fellow-creatures for not detecting and adjusting themselves nicely to my conflicting moods. I certainly do not hang my head and wear a rueful countenance; still Margot is not dull; she felt my loneliness, and was good enough to care, and—but this is distinctly not a general topic.

The Club Christmas tree was an ingratiating way of opening our new Club House, since our people are best reached through their children. I concluded to call it "Club" because the name is harmless and social, and conceals no philanthropic sting, whereas our stiff-necked villagers could never be inveigled into a "Home" of any kind, or even a "People's Pavilion." It is a very good building, simple, solid, spacious, warm, and light, with a reading-room, sitting-rooms, director and committee-rooms, study and play-rooms for the children, a supper-room, and a hall for music,

lectures, and assemblies of all kinds. It has not grown by magic, but has cost me much time, money, annoyance, and perplexity; the latter chiefly because the feeling in the village has been sullenly inimical to the undertaking from the first. However, I think I've got the thing in running order now. After the gifts were distributed, the children's songs sung, coffee, cake, and sandwiches had been offered, and it seemed to me the chilling reserve of the village fathers ought to be somewhat melted, and therefore the fatal moment was come, I mounted the platform, feeling like a malefactor ascending the scaffold, for there is nothing more embarrassing than a good deed that won't strike fire. I simply said that I had for a long time desired to make some return for kindnesses which I had received from them, for much helpfulness, and countless proofs of confidence and attachment, and that I begged them to accept the Club House as my Christmas gift to them, their wives, and children. At this point

my oration came to an abrupt close. I had planned various edifying things to say, but, confronted by that row of men's faces as expressionless as a stone wall, I stopped short. Responding to a toast at a Kaiser banquet has never been difficult for me, but before these imperturbable old sea-dogs, I began to suspect what stage-fright means. They stared at me as uncompromisingly as if I were insulting them, and I, for an instant, wished that the earth would open and swallow my Club House and all my ill-judged undertakings. Then occurred one of those portentous trifles which decide the fate of battles and innovations. A five-year-old Kruse boy, ecstatic possessor of a toy donkey, shouted one shrill "Hurrah!" whether dedicated to me or to his long-eared friend, I have no means of determining, but privately suspect it was exclusively the latter which roused his enthusiasm. At any rate, that child saved the Club House and me. There was laughter, a stir, a murmur, and presently the

Kruse men gave three cheers. The favour of this powerful faction secured, there was nothing more to fear. But what if it had been but a Miller or Mayer boy's donkey which elicited that first rapturous shout!

Kruse senior, with incomparable dignity, thanked me in the name of the village. Thus encouraged, I ventured to lead the way to the reading-room. Margot and Batheldis had dressed two children as much like their own venerable grandfather and grandmother as possible, and there the little things sat side by side at the long table covered with books and papers, in the middle of the large bright room. Bewigged, be-spectacled, she with her cap and knitting, he with pipe, mug, and a long white beard, both peering demurely at newspapers, they made a droll and charming picture. Presently the people, in the best possible humour, were examining bookshelves and engravings, and some seated themselves gravely and read a while, to show that they were accustomed to this sort of

thing. Over the door is "*Reading-Room for Men and Women.*" To accentuate the latter significant word, we had arrayed the little grandmother. To a good supper in the dining-room they needed no seductions, but fell to most graciously. By nine o'clock the children were sent home, and we had a business meeting, about which I will tell you later. I had no little trouble in inducing them to elect a few women on various committees. But I insidiously suggested the Club was a family affair, also that Richard Kruse's wife had more sense than most of the men, which greatly pleased the old fellow. He took it, of course, as a tribute to himself. Finally I begged them as a favour to try it for a year, knowing very well that if the women are once in, they will stay. At half-past ten we adjourned, and I felt relieved that the opening was not the fiasco it had threatened to be. I heartily hope the thing is going to be profitable to them; but I so often blunder when I think I'm doing something clever, and my clever

strokes are so often purely by accident, that sometimes I am tempted to let people alone.

Since Christmas the Club is in full blast, the reading-room much frequented, and we have had an excellent concert by a Swedish singer, and a young violinist, who, at my request, came over from Copenhagen; a lecture on "Ships," by Professor Schultz, of Berlin, whose seafaring audience sauntered in with a superior air, but speedily was listening to him with breathless interest, and unconsciously swallowed good doses of history interlarded in his tales of canoes, rafts, barges, and galleys. A red-hot social democrat orator has also favoured us. This is a returned sailor—Horst—who has been in many ports, and picked up scraps of wit and wisdom, which he flings about right valiantly. He delights to waylay me and argue, but as I am a busy man and he is not, I cannot always gratify him. He was chagrined to discover that I was not wholly ignorant of modern movements; that I had frequently attended

social democrat meetings in Berlin; that I fully agreed with many of his premises, when not with all his deductions; and that I was a socialist myself, with certain reservations. I told him the existing evils were apparent to all thoughtful men, but men differed radically, and had a right to differ, as to the method of cure. This he denies, of course, allowing no *Gedankenfreiheit* whatever. Revolutionists never realize that they themselves are the worst possible despots. He asked me recently if I would dare to let him make a speech at the Club. I replied that so far as I was concerned it would give me pleasure to hear him, but I had no more authority than the other Directors. If he wished to speak, he must send in his request properly, and must also agree to listen civilly in case someone should choose to reply. Fritz Kruse volunteered to meet him. The debate came off before a crowded house. Knowing tolerably well what Horst would say, I primed Fritz a bit—not his sentiments, but his parlia-

mentary tactics. I had half a mind not to go down that evening, for while Horst is not overburdened with delicacy, I fancied my presence might dampen his eloquence more or less, and I wanted to leave him free to paint me in the blackest colours. However, I finally went, which as things turned out was lucky.

When Horst approached the bloated capitalist business and the criminal landowner, there was a burst of rather offensive laughter, for everybody knows that there is not one of my labourers over thirty who does not own his cottage and bit of land, and that each has his share of my profits—if profits there be—and that since the day when my father's death called me suddenly to the management of the estate, I have been steadily working in these directions. So Horst's shots fell a trifle wide of the mark at first. Irritated by this, and by their not precisely *sotto voce* jeers, he went further, and attacked me personally, denouncing me for being what he called an aristo-

crat and the son of my father. This terrible impeachment made a tremendous uproar. Old Malte got up in a fine fury, and roared at him that he ought to be ashamed of himself, and better go about his business, instead of standing there jawing and lying, and abusing his betters. Then followed a minute and merciless record of all Horst's youthful peccadillos from the time he was in petticoats. You may imagine my amusement at this grotesque intermezzo. The Kruse men applauded and yelled, of course—Malte's wife being a Kruse—and made such a pandemonium, poor Horst could not go on. There he stood, frantically gesticulating, and young Kruse beside him, likewise brandishing his arms. It was a priceless moment, and I wished it were not my duty to interfere. When the people saw me on the platform they became tolerably quiet, and let me speak.

I told them that they had misunderstood Horst, that he had nothing against me personally,

but only against the class to which I belonged, and I should be obliged if they would listen to him attentively, for he had had permission to speak, and the Club could not give and retract its word in this fashion; that Horst had a right to his opinions—every man had; that he had travelled, and could tell us much that was interesting; and that I felt sure Fritz Kruse would be a match for him, if only they would have patience and give both men a fair chance.

The audience reluctantly concluded to sit down and behave itself. Horst made some good points, which I alone applauded. Kruse, who had been waiting like a hound in the leash, spoke well for a maiden effort. He was less sharp and adroit than Horst, but clear, sensible, and zealous. Besides what he had prepared, he took me under his wing very neatly, and of his own inspiration. However, if he had spouted arrant nonsense, he would have had the sympathy of that crowd; for in the first place, he was a Kruse, and then they

are so unenlightened, so feudal; they had no notion of sitting still and hearing me insulted. As to social democracy, it has scarcely penetrated here. You know well the contracted sphere and the tenacity of attachment of our islanders. It is incredible, how exclusive, how conservative, how apathetic toward the world at large they are; how they all regard their little home-spot of earth as the chief spot—in fact, the only spot of importance in the universe; how they cling to the old and familiar, and want no improvement, not a utensil or machine which their grandfathers did not know; how totally without interest and comprehension they are, not only for the outer world, but one country, one hamlet for another, the Mönchgut men for the Jasmund men—everywhere stolidity, or jealousy and contempt. Ignorant, superstitious, obstinate race! Yet hard-working, patient, full of endurance and fortitude, and loyal men, stubborn in their virtues as in their faults.

Knowing them and loving them well, I see much work before me. You know I am not a pessimist, not a bit *fin de siècle*. I couldn't be if I would, and wouldn't if I could. I think it is good to live precisely now, at the end of the nineteenth century—in these pulsating, electric, prescient days. I am not so optimistic as to expect that a new heaven and a new earth can ever be suddenly created, or that any one system is faultless, and will miraculously produce universal happiness. But with quiet, continued, resolute effort, much may be attained; and I have the conviction that I am "called" to work for the enlightenment and rights of the people among whom I was born, and whom I understand, at least as well as any other man may hope to understand them. Sometimes, in certain black moods, I have asked myself what I should do if I should ever lose you, Ilse, by death, or any mischance—which latter diplomatic phrase means, in more fearless language, if you should love some

other man, if you should never return to me. I have often thought I would go to Africa, and none here should ever hear of me again; but I would do no such thing. I would simply stay here and fight it out, blundering on as best I could. There is work enough for a better man than I at my own door. I have no need to help colonization in Africa, or Australia, or the Western United States. My life-work lies clearly before me, whatever comes, and I shall try to do it, with you or without you—but that is a weary, horrible thought, a ghastly thought. Let me rather be “a little glad,” as Margot says, reminding myself that the New Year has come, the year which will bring you home.

Ilse, I have two commissions for you. I want a copy, the best you can obtain, of Murillo's St. Anthony of Padua—the one in Berlin; not the angels, only the central figure with the child in his arms. This is for my own personal gratification. And then I, even I, want a statue. I see

it plainly, the thing I want. It is the spirit of "Light," with hopeful eyes, an uplifted torch, and striding swiftly on. She must be beautiful and bold, for whoever fights the powers of darkness needs courage. Make her strong and fearless enough to face an angry mob. You will doubtless be surprised at my temerity in approaching you on your own ground, yet I'm not an out-and-out Vandal, after all. It seems to me I have a vague suspicion of the meaning of such a life as Albrecht Dürer's, or Michael Angelo's, or Velasquez's, or Millet's, or many I could name. It is the earnestness, the profound conviction that I revere in art as in other things, but—there, I am at it again, and I presume to call the Kruses stubborn!

And so our little world revolves—far, very far from you. Do you need me? Do you want me? Are you really happy down there, Ilschen? Are you getting what you want?

ODO,

One word about "Light." It is for the Club lecture-room. It is not in your line, I presume. Order it where you please, and make what terms you think right. You will know better than I what I want. I make no condition, except one—I don't want Herwegh to have anything to do with it.

XXI.

From the Countess to Count von Jaromar.

PALAZZO MALASPINA,

January 9th.

MY DEAR ODO,—

To-day I am tired, and am going to give myself up to letter-writing (a little), reading (not too much), scheming (just enough to delight, and not to excite me), and dreaming (and as that in my present mood is most tempting of all, it shall have my freest largesse of time).

I am first about to clear off some correspondence, "all about nothing and everything," as Lotta Heideloff's little girl is wont to say with an

air of profound wiseacredom. What an absurd child she is! Have I told you about her before? The other day she was present when several people were drinking coffee and talking scandal. Herwegh made some remark about a Marchese Somebody, to the effect that it would be commonplace to say of such a man that he had broken all the Ten Commandments; the number should be extended at least to thirteen. Ulrich Heidehoff laughingly responded, "I have always heard, Friedrich, that you and the Marchese were inseparable!" I saw little Ottilie look fixedly at her beloved friend. "Ottilie," I asked, "do you believe that Herr Herwegh has broken all the Commandments?" She glanced at me with calm, unsuspecting eyes as she replied in all seriousness, "Some of them I think he has only *cracked*!" Is not that far more delightful than the most cynical sayings of a Heine or a Voltaire? Friedrich overheard it, and with a whimsical smile remarked *sotto voce*, "I have never married, and now shall

probably go to my grave without the privilege of owning such a child. Yet I don't feel as though a new terror were added to Death!" I like him when he is whimsical, not when he is cynical. I told him that Lucrezia and I were going to become great friends. He smiled, but made no reply. I was displeased, and he saw it. "Friendship," he then added, in a tone that might or might not indicate sincerity, "friendship is impossible between a prince and, say, an office clerk; it is almost as difficult between a handsome man and a beautiful woman; between two beautiful women it is but a dream, a poetic fiction."

"You have little real belief in women," I replied scornfully. "On the contrary," he rejoined, "physiologically as well as otherwise, I think women superior to men. Woman is the nervous part of humanity, as man is the muscular."

Count Kourbaline, who is on the staff of the

Russian embassy here, and an intimate friend of Herwegh's though to me an objectionable man in every way, overheard and joined in our criss-cross conversation. But I won't repeat what was said, though some of it was amusing enough, and a little, a very little, even witty; still, it was all *banal*—at least to me, who know so well that Herwegh is not really the man it is his pleasure in public to pretend he is. If he were, I should hate him, for all his greatness as a sculptor. Indeed, I shall tell him this some day.

Of course, the talk drifted on to marriage. "There is only one thing essential to a satisfactory union," said Kourbaline. "Friendship," I hazarded; "Separation," suggested Herwegh. "Neither," exclaimed Kourbaline, "but merely that the husband should be deaf and that the wife should be blind." Somehow, I can't enjoy these things as some people do. Even Lotta, who had joined us, laughed at what she called the Count's wickedness, and yet what he said

was to her obviously a natural enough saying. I sometimes think I am very stupid. She (Lotta) turned to Kourbaline and told him to beware; that there was a certain Viking Count away up in the north, who might appear at any moment. He made a fantastic grimace, and said something in French so rapidly that I did not catch it. It was something about Orpheus. I wonder what it was. Before I could ask Herwegh, who had turned for a moment to speak to some one passing, Kourbaline had seated himself at the piano and was singing blithely:

*“Du meine Seele, du mein Herz,
Du meine Wonn’, O du mein Schmerz.”*

And now I am tired writing to you. Don’t be offended, for I am going to scribble to you at intervals betwixt this and bedtime; only, as I hinted to you at the outset, I am in a variable mood to-day. I must enjoy my holiday in my own way. I shall write those little notes I spoke of. By the by, I have received a commission for

another Undine, and whom do you think from? From a Grand-Duke, though his extremely High and Remote Mightiness is as yet known to me only through his intermediary, Count Kourbaline. And then I shall dip into some French books that have come for me—Bourget's *Essais de Psychologie Contemporaine*, and Guy de Maupassant's new novel, and my favourite Shelley, perhaps. And then I shall dream and idle till lunch, and idle and dream till Signora Lucrezia makes her promised call. I wish I had never gone to the Villa Mallerini. Indeed, indeed, it would have been better had I flown northward, if but for a glimpse of you and the others.

[Afternoon.]

It is only so in point of fact, for it has not yet struck two. I have lunched entirely off fruit and that delicious white curded goat's milk the Romans call *riccotta*, and a little of the light, delicate golden wine of Montefiascone, which to

my depraved feminine palate is superior even to the best Orvieto, which you told me to thank the Gods for each time I put it to my lips. It has been a pleasant day. I seem to be in a dream. One loses so much in even the best dreams, not knowing them to be dreams. Perhaps I may think differently some day. But to-day I am young, and alive, and happy; and oh, it is so good to be so! Christmas-day seems to me not only far away now, but almost as if it too were a dream. I wish it were, and that it would not recur. Have you ever noticed how naturally every beautiful thing either turns gold or lends itself to a golden touch? I watched a long sunbeam steal through the curtains beside my open window and turn the olive-green shades into a richer tone; then upon a Japanese screen, which it made positively radiant; then it lingered upon an old vellum-bound volume which I picked up at a book-stall in the Via Giulio Romano, and caused it to gleam like ivory in firelight. Ah,

there! how a fugitive word will allure one. My sunbeam has wandered into a corner beyond my old tulip-wood piano, and there I leave it; for that word "firelight" has called up Jaromar, and all the dear homely comforts and quiet beauty and—what can I call it?—northern delight. I have a sudden longing for the north at its bleakest, the pines heavy with snow and creaking in the rush of the wind; the boom of the sea calling, calling, through the darkness; and above all for a corner in a certain room I know of in Schloss Jaromar, with no light save from a great pine-log fire, and no one speaking, not even you—no sound except the wind around the Schloss gables and the *crack—crackle—crash* of the glowing logs. Oh, never believe that I am not as much a Northerner as you! I could give up just now my well-loved Rome, just as I have thrown aside that tiresome Guy de Maupassant. Fancy if the world were nothing but *Boule de Suif* and *Bel Ami* on a large scale! And I could——

[Four o'clock.]

No Lucrezia yet; but Herwegh has been here. I have had a long and earnest talk with him. He is not the man you suppose him to be. Even I have been unjust to him. You will perhaps think better of him when you learn that he spoke to me frankly about my position here, and even warned me not to see too much of the Rasellas and their English friend St. Clair, and all that set; indeed, he went as far as to put me on my guard with Count Kourbaline—and this though Kourbaline is one of his intimate friends! I am somewhat perturbed, I confess, at his not having spoken to me about the Mallerinis before. I told him frankly that he had no right to mislead me. But he was so contrite, and I saw too that he had erred out of loyalty to his friends, that I forgave him. It appears that Cesare has an evil reputation, and that there are even unpleasant rumours about Lucrezia. In a word, he was quite earnest about my seeing no more of her;

and suggested in the most cavalier fashion that I should simply refuse to see her. This, of course, I cannot meanwhile consent to do. I have been her guest, and I have no reason for considering her a woman best left to her own devices. I cannot help regret at Herwegh's having spoken so strongly against her, though he obviously did so with reluctance and only to serve me. I did not tell him she was coming this afternoon, but neither did I let him understand that I was going to act on his advice unreservedly. This naturally led to the subject of the Christmas party and the sudden break-up. I could see that Herwegh was unwilling to say all he knew, so I did not press him. I gather that there was a duel between Cesare and one of his acquaintances whom he had wronged (or who had wronged him; I could not make out which), in which Lucrezia was also in some way involved. Friedrich, I imagine, was Cesare's second.

But I dropped the subject when I saw it was unwelcome. Herwegh surprised me by depreciating Rome as an art-centre, for a sculptor at any rate. He told me a great deal about Parisian art-life, and the great advantages of all kinds. He has made me quite in love with the idea. Imagine! he has taken a charming villa, with an immense studio, between St. Cloud and Suresnes—the loveliest part of the Seine near Paris. He declares Paris is the only place for a sculptor. I am so sorry that he thinks of leaving Rome. He is certainly the most astonishing person, to keep all this quiet till he had concluded his plans—for he said little to the point at the Villa Malzerini.

I asked him what Count Kourbaline said before he turned away to sing. He laughed maliciously and replied that the Count was of the same mind as somebody else who wrote, or said, that for one Orpheus who went to hell to seek his wife, how many husbands would not even go

to Paradise to find theirs. I said what I thought, and think, that Count Kourbaline is an essentially vulgar man, however high his social position may be; and that I was well content to drop the acquaintanceship. I think Herwegh was somewhat surprised that I showed so much resentment. But, to tell the truth, I am tired of these endless gibes at married people, and at women as women. I am glad to say that Herwegh absolutely agreed with me, and even admitted that his own habitual cynicism was only skin-deep. He has asked me to do something that makes me very proud and happy. He has been commissioned to draw a series of outline-illustrations to accompany the text of the Austrian poet Hamerling's fine poem *Ahasuer in Rom*; and he has begged me to collaborate with him. He has not time to do the whole series, nor, he affirms, the ability (or, as I should say for him, the mood); and he wants me to undertake ten or twelve. As, naturally, outline drawing has been my strong

point with the pencil, I have agreed to try. It will take much time and thought to decide which lines or passages contain the happiest inspirations. Herwegh tells me that even financially it may be well worth my while, both immediately and prospectively.

Altogether I am in a very elated state of mind. Delightful possibilities are opening before me. It has all excited me so much that I am half inclined to forfeit my day's idleness, after all. Ten minutes after he had left, I saw that my room was just flooded with sunshine, and if it were not for Lucrezia's promised call, I should have gone out into the beautiful world, to rejoice in the sunlight and the gladness everywhere. How lovely winter is in the south.

But no, I must wait for Lucrezia. I am now lazily going to lie down and dream over *Ahasuer in Rom* and Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*. One will help the other, I am sure.

I'll keep this open to add the account of the

Mallerini's visit, and to tell you how the evening is to be passed. I wonder what she wants to confide or discover. Her sister-in-law sighed for France in the most ridiculous way; did I tell you? The woman had not been in Italy ten days!

Life certainly must be very pleasant in Paris. It is the centre of the Art-world. Fancy how charming in the spring months to live in a shady place on the Seine and yet quite close to Paris. And the freedom, and joyous company, and the——oh, but I must not think of it! And yet, why not? This was to be my day of dreams.

Addio, sposo mio; I go to my sofa to dream.

[Evening.]

How horrible people can be! I feel very wretched to-night, and wish I were—well, anywhere save in Rome.

I have not much to tell you, after all. Lucrezia Mallerini came at five o'clock, and as she is not

long gone, and it is about to strike six, her visit has been for less than an hour. It seems three times as long.

She told me a very wild and improbable story about herself and a lover, and Cesare's cruelty, and, in a word, more than confirmed Herwegh's hints about her having been implicated in the duel on Christmas night. I was very distressed; her manner, too, was so extraordinary. Once I thought she was going to spring at me. At last I became wearied, and let her know that she had told me at once too much and too little, and that I could not see, either way, how I could interfere in the affair, directly or indirectly. Upon this she suddenly forgot herself completely. It is quite needless for me to repeat what she said, but I rose, and quietly begged her to withdraw, as the interview could now be productive of no good, and was most painful to me.

I do not know what the upshot would have

been, but as I opened the door, there, to my astonishment and Lucrezia's consternation, stood her brother-in-law, Egidio Mallerini. "Your husband is seriously ill," he said, but in a harsh and almost insulting tone, while he not only did not lift his hat to me, but gave me a look which made me almost cry out.

"Your husband is seriously ill; so be so good as to recover from your hysterics and accompany me without delay."

I cannot repeat what she said. She is a slanderer as well as a traitorous and evil woman.

It all makes me so unhappy. Oh, how I wish I had never met this woman—that I had never gone to their wretched villa!

P.S.—I have just time to scribble these closing lines. Lilien Röhrich has sent for me to join them at dinner and go on afterwards to the opera to hear Mascagni's new piece. I am so glad merely to get out of my rooms and be

amused. But don't worry about the Lucrezia episode. I shall soon forget the pain she has caused me. And, indeed, *withal*, I *am* sorry for her. But—

XXII.

From the same to the same.

PALAZZO MALASPINA,

January 14.

Thanks for your good letter about Christmas, and about your work, which always interests me; and I am going to tell you about my work, Odo, believing that you really do care to hear about it, though ever and again there is something in your letters that makes me fear you think I am here to carry out a whim or an unreasonable desire, instead of what I myself certainly take to be a duty. And—but no; explanations of arguments in letters are even more annoying and confusing than they are apt to be orally.

I am very happy in the progress I am making.

Under Herwegh's guidance and suggestion I have not only learned much, but (what I now recognize to have been imperative, though I had but a vague prevision of it) have had to unlearn scarce less. My little "Rose" and "Lily," of which I wrote to you so jubilantly, were unhesitatingly condemned by my *maestro* when he saw my studies for them. "It is well that they are only in clay," was the sole comment he made at first. And now, alas!—No! *Evoë O!*—they have vanished into nothingness as though they were no whit less imperishable than their far more beautiful prototypes, which can be bought at any moment of the flower sellers for a few *soldi*.

I have learned a great deal, too, from long study in the sculpture galleries of the Vatican and the Capitol—not from *visiting* them, but by studying every square inch, every fugitive touch of the modelling thumb or the finishing chisel, in one, or at most two or three, of the noblest works only. Sometimes Herwegh has generously spared

an hour or so to act as my *cicerone*. It is so delightful when he can come, for, besides his rare technical skill and knowledge, he knows all about each sculptor's life, and work, and true rank; and, moreover, I verily believe there is not a Greek legend with which he is unfamiliar. I am ashamed to find how ignorant I am about the history even of my own art. Again I have spent some happy hours at the Borghese, the Rospigliosi, and other private collections. I have been singularly touched, too, by one thing. In the Prince Borghese's small but, oh, so lovely collection of ancient ivory-sculpture, there are three exquisite pieces—a short frieze, probably representing Dionysos with two beautiful Bacchantæ; a small urn, that might indeed be a drinking-cup, with nothing but a large butterfly and some strewn poppies; and the figure of a young faun. It was the faun that first attracted my attention. I did not understand the Greek inscription minutely cut in the little block, but Herwegh told me it was to the effect that

“Rhodope, the wife of Sionòs, had made this Faun.” It was this Greek woman also who made the urn and the frieze. Almost nothing is known of her, though the legend that Herwegh related touches me strangely. The date of her birth or death, of her exact period even, is unknown; but one or two confused reports indicate that Sionòs was a warrior, and lived in the hill-country beyond Athens, while Rhodope had left him for love of her art and had settled in Corinth. He became jealous of her fame, and angry at her long absence, and sent her word that she was no wife of his. Yet she would not return, and, instead, vowed that she was wedded to her art, but that if she did join hands with any man it would be with Phaon of Helioskios, a sculptor like herself. Sionòs thereupon sent word that she might straightway carve her own urn, as the day of her rejoicing was at its end. But here the legend stops. I think that Sionòs either came himself and slew Rhodope, or sent some one to poison her; but

Herwegh declares that she served her art and her happiness, and foiled Sionòs, by going to Syracuse with Phaon, and lived joyously there in that great and wealthy city.

I have thought often of Rhodope's story. I wonder how much of it is true. Do you know, it is not all fancy on my part, or mere flattery on that of Herwegh, to say that there is a strong resemblance between her work and my own. I am impressed by this more than I can well say. Are the old stories true? Do we, indeed, re-live our lives in varying circumstances? And if so, am I Rhodope indeed, though a Prussian *Gräfin* in Rome, instead of an Athenian lady in Corinth or Syracuse? Ah no, for Graf Odo Jaromar is a very different person from the barbarian Sionòs; and, besides, *this* Rhodope does not wish to stay always in Corinth,—that is, Rome. If Syracuse, otherwise Paris, call her one way, the valleys of Helicon, otherwise Rügen, call her the other!

But I forgot to tell you that after condemning

my wretched little flower-statuettes, Herwegh (who nevertheless still thinks that carving in ivory is my *métier*) assured me that I must adopt an altogether freer method in my work. He has forbidden me to touch the chisel at all just now, except to finish my commissioned Undine. The "Emilia Viviani" he says promised splendidly, but is spoilt by what I had vainly hoped was refinement, but which he justly calls mere prettiness; and so I have heroically—for it caused me a pang—demolished it also. All the same, I hope for a true success with the "Emilia" that is in my mind. Well, I am to model *roughly* and on a large scale, rather over than under life size. And thus it is that I am working in the rough (of course at Herwegh's studio, for it would be impracticable here) at two figures, one a Hamadryad, and the other a Young Shepherd. Both are from the same model, the beautiful boy I saw on the Campagna one day—you will remember my telling you about him? Herwegh went searching till he found him,

arranged with him and his shepherd-father, and so each morning, except *domenicas* and special *festas*, in walks through this southern side of Rome from the Porta Furba, my shy, handsome Giovan' Antonio, or "Vanni" simply, as his parents call him. Poor boy, he was so shy at having to pose as a model, though many of his fellow *contadini* do so. Herwegh laughed, and said he would soon get over that; but as yet it is quite pathetic to see how his large brown-black eyes wander with a strange apprehensive look from Herwegh's beautiful Venus Anadyomene and Lilith and his unfinished "Sin" (a lovely and seductive female figure modelled with extraordinary grace and power, and with marvellous winsomeness of expression), to me, and then to the inchoate clay that is slowly taking shape under my hands, then again at me, then at Herwegh and his "Sin," and so over and over. Once, when Herwegh was out, for he does not allow a model to speak a word during a sitting, I asked Vanni if he were happy.

“No,” he said, with a kind of stern candour, “I am chill sitting here like this, and my heart burns with anger when he, *il scultore tedesco*, makes me stand naked on yonder wooden block—before—before *you* and—and—these other women.” I could not help smiling at my being thus associated with Venus and Lilith. I do believe the boy thinks they are as much alive as I am! I tried to explain; but he turned his great eyes on me, and asked with a bewildering simplicity, “Have you told Mary, the most pure and most blessed Mother of God, that you sit here daily and look at these shameless women, and that you take clay and make an image of me for—for—ah, Dio mio, I know not what!” and here the strange youth broke down with a momentary nervous sob, and crossed himself at least thrice.

But, none the less, I am getting on. I am working at this “Hamadryad” and “Young Shepherd” with a sense of freedom and vigour such as I have never known before. It does not

matter how roughly I model them, Herwegh says: anything so long as I do not make them neat and dainty and pretty. "A work of art without breadth of treatment is, essentially, a contradiction in terms;" this is the text of many a serviceable lesson he has given me.

[Later.]

I left off writing to go for a *giro*, as they say here. Sometimes I grow so restless that you would scarce know me. I cannot even listen long to music. If in company, I am bored; if alone, I am weary. Perhaps it is due to the scirocco; we have had so much of it the last week or two, and the Romans declare that in a bad scirocco one expends two breaths of vigorous life for each whiff of relaxing air one inhales. And yet, to-day at any rate, it is not a wet or gloomy scirocco, and the atmosphere is of a lovely, silvery, delicate pearl-grey. I went out and stood for some time leaning on the terrace over the Spanish steps.

Rome looked so remotely beautiful; a city of dream. The Janiculum and Monte Mario were darkly grey, but the rest of the city was in tone like a vast moonstone or opal looked at through gauze. It was all so silent to me. Two little boys, disengaged models, in exaggeratedly picturesque costumes, were gambling with centésimi on one of the steps beneath me, and further away a girl and an older woman, clad in vividly bright yellow and orange-barred shawls and with thick red, white and blue serge aprons, exchanged confidences. Beyond the sudden sharp cries of the boys and the hum of the women's talk, I was scarce conscious of other sounds. Some distance away to my right I could of course catch the tinkling fall of the Accademia Fontana, and below me I could both see and hear the splash of the great fountain in the Piazza; but both those sounds were part of the dream. All the usual traffic seemed to be at a standstill, or the noise of it to be muffled by the breath of the scirocco.

Then I went down the Spanish Stairs, and hesitated awhile whether to drive to the Janiculum or to the Villa Borghese. I did neither, but, after having seated myself in my little open *vettura*, and given myself keen pleasure by simply loading the front seat with winter roses and camelias and long sprays of yellow wattle from the Riviera, drove out to the Ponte Molle, across the Tiber (which gleamed like a long broad ribbon of shot silk, mostly silver-grey), and then back and round by what was Antemnæ in the old Etrurian days. There are few flowers anywhere in that part of Rome, even in April, and yet the air was full of exquisite fragrances. I am, as you know, very sensitive to odours, the subtle half-hidden scents of shadow-loving plants, the delicate thrills of perfume from wild growing things, and perhaps above all to the intoxicating breath of the earth when the sun steeps it in hot light, that strange smell as of the living body of the world. Just before entering the Porta di San

Popolo a whim took me to drive up the gloomy Via delle Mura. I wish I had not gone. It was desolate, and dark and chill. I don't know *what* could have made me so depressed. Don't laugh at me when I tell you that the stupid tears at last came to my eyes. How I dislike camelias—melancholy deathly flowers! Besides, they have neither fragrance nor pleasant associations; they always seem to me as if they had been *made*, and had not grown as other flowers grow. Before we drove in at the Porta S. Pancrazio I threw them all away—everything except the sweet smelling wattle-sprays.

And now I am going to bed; I am tired. But I am feeling better. Such a charming note from my friend awaited me. I am to try my hand at portraiture to-morrow, for poor Vanni is unwell and can't come in to Rome for a week. Herwegh suggests that I try to model his head and features in the guise of Phaon, and he will do me as Rhodope. I look for a happy week's

work—for we shall have the studio to ourselves for at any rate the first five days.

I shall be too busy to write perhaps, so you know what to think if you do not hear from me soon.

Addio,

Your affectionate but tired

ILSE.

P.S.—A letter has just come from Lucrezia Mallerini. I am not going to open it. I shall either return it, or destroy it. Do you think I am right or foolish?

XXIII.

From the same to the same.

PALAZZO MALASPINA.

This is the third letter to you I have begun within the past hour. The others are torn up—as this may shortly be.

How am I to tell you? What am I to tell

you? I would give—oh, God knows what I would give to be able to avert this bitter pain from you.

Odo—Odo—you are still my best friend! Can you help me? No one else can. Oh, how am I to tell you? What can I say? I have had a terrible shock. But oh, the pain, the pain at my heart!

But you *must* know, and from me; it is unavoidable. Gladly would I bury it all, and forget it, and Rome, and all that has happened—but I cannot, I *cannot*. I could never respect myself; no, I could never even see you again if I were to be silent upon this misery I have brought upon myself.

I will try and tell you all.

You will see I shirk nothing when I tell you at once that the past week—till yesterday—has been, no, I could not even then call it the *happiest*, and yet I have no other word for it, unless I say the most thrilling week in my life. I rose each morning as if the world were a beautiful

dream, and it needed but the exercise of creative will on my part to make it a reality. From the outset I made such progress with my sculpture that I was almost startled at what I felt within me, at the new and triumphant power that seemed to be shaping every thought in my mind and guiding every touch of my fingers. Even when I was not working the hours passed as though they were minutes. We went everywhere together; we were always together. I saw none of my friends, and even Lilien Röhrich left me undisturbed when she perceived how preoccupied I was. In the evenings we strolled to and fro beneath the ilexes of the Accademia Fontana, and talked of all things, and above all of our work, and what we were to do, and alas! of Paris, and what lay awaiting us in the near future, all unseen and unguessed even. Sometimes he came home with me, and we spent hours reading "Ahasuer," and imagining some illustrations and outlining others.

Yesterday I went to his studio as usual. Vanni was at the door. He asked me if *Il Tedesco* were ill or angry, because he had told him to go away, to return towards evening. I said a few kind words, and arranged a sitting for next day, and then went in.

He was singularly reserved, and after our greetings were over I began my work in silence. A little later I heard a curtain drawn, and looked round. There I saw a bust of myself, though in every way beyond me in its strange beauty. It was Rhodope. On the floor lay the fragments of what had been Phaon. "That clumsy Vanni did it, Ilse, but it does not matter. Here I am, I, your Phaon. Which is it to be? Shall we go to our Syracuse, or do we stay in this Corinth, and (and he pointed to the broken bust and strewn fragments) and *you be responsible for this!*"

I cannot tell you what happened thereafter. God knows with what pain you have already

guessed it all. And I spare you what I would fain spare myself in remembrance.

I was swept away by his burning words, by his golden promises, by the rapturous hope and passion in his eyes. And oh, Odo, I *did* love him. Forgive me, but I cannot keep it from you. It may not have been the deepest, the truest love; it may all have been foredoomed to failure; I cannot say—I know nothing—for I am blind and deaf and dumb in my misery.

Before I left the studio that afternoon I had promised to go away to Paris with him; to begin a new life there; and to forget that I had ever been Ilse Jaro—no, I dare not say it—to forget that I had ever been the Ilse whom you and the dear ones in that distant, distant north had loved and trusted.

I would not let him go out with me. I wanted to be alone.

When I reached the corner of the Vicolo da Tolentino I saw a woman standing, waiting for

me, watching me. It was Lucrezia Mallerini. In a moment, in a flash, came to me with sickening dread, and yet I know not also what sudden exaltation, that she was the messenger of Soniòs. Never, never, never for Rhodope, the faithless wife, that future of which she had dreamed.

No one meeting us would have guessed the dreadful thing that was all about us. Her eyes flamed at me out of her white face. We did not speak but walked on together. There was no need to speak—till we were in my room.

The first thing she said to me when we entered, and I had closed the door, was: “*Now*, will you listen to me?” I had guessed her secret before this, of course; deep down in my heart I suppose I have known it ever since Christmas. “What is it you want with me?” I demanded. Her answer was another question: “Why have you refused of late to see me? Why did you return my letter unopened?” I looked at her steadily, before I spoke again: “I suppose you

loved him, and now hate him because he loves *me.*”

She flung some letters on the table before me, and with a harsh laugh, said: “You fool you believe, no doubt, that he loves you as he has never loved any woman? What is it he wants with you? is it to be Sicily, or Venice, or Vienna, or Paris?” When she added bitterly, “He always spends these visits at one of them, Paris preferably,” I think that if I could have killed her by my will, I would have done so then and there.

I laughed at her; told her that she was utterly mistaken if she thought she could come between us; and said I know not what other wild and wicked and foolish thing.

Lucrezia stared at me. “Do you know,” she said at last, slowly, “if I thought there were the faintest chance that you two should still go away together, I should kill him—or you.” I did not answer, and she went on: “It would be needless to tell you what all men know of him, what even

your good friends, the Heideloffs, can verify; but I shall speak to you of two women whom he has ruined. Nay, you *must* listen; yes, though you should die in the listening. You have doubtless heard the name of one, Olivia Czlemka, the wife of the Polish patriot. The usual end came; the place, in her case, was Paris. Isidor Czlemka, who had forfeited everything for her sake, shot himself. I forget how long it lasted; it does not matter. As for her vicissitudes, after she was left to face shame and disaster, they were not much worse than might be expected; that is, *for a time*. Then she sank, plumb down into the depths—and in Paris, well, in Paris the depths have no bottom.”

When Lucrezia stopped and drew a long breath, I was sick with horror. Already some dreadful instinct told me that she was speaking the truth. I made a sign to her at last to go on, if go on she must. “Signora von Jaromar,” and the tone of her voice terrified me—“Signora von

Jaromar, I tell you that Olivia Czlemka was, when she first came to Rome, my dearest friend. And now I have to confide to you the story of another woman. She is, perhaps, the most mad fool of all, for she loves him still. Do you know what he is? He is, as the great sculptor, one of the best of men; all that is good in him comes out *there*. As the man of the world, he has a heart that is as a corpse, that can neither see, nor hear, nor feel.

“This woman was the betrothed wife of a Neapolitan count. But, for his sake, she broke off the marriage at the last moment. Her father died ultimately broken-hearted. Before he died he saw her married to the wealthy Florentine, the sixty-years old merchant, Paolo di Paoli. But in the second year of her marriage she met *him* at Bagni di Lucca. She never went back to Florence, nor to the old man who cursed her to the last. *He* took her to Venice. It was the happiest year of her life. Yet not a year, because

before the end of it he had tired of her. He is nearly always kind and gentle, when it is to his pleasure. As a gentleman—it is *he* who calls himself so—he prides himself upon his tact and forbearance. I suppose that when he struck this woman, in Milano, where she had followed him, it was because his self-possession had momentarily forsaken him in the shock of finding that a woman's desperation could survive insult and desertion.

“She did not die; she followed him no further. She did nothing heroic. She had a widowed sister at Bologna, whither she went. A year and a half passed. One day, on the occasion of a ball to celebrate a great national event, a Roman gentleman of high rank was struck by her beauty—a beauty which, strangely enough, had grown and not waned since her Venice-madness. He saw her again and again; and, in the end, he married her. To this day he does not know but that he married the unmarried sister of the widowed Lucia Vescovi of Bologna.

“They went to live in Rome. She was almost happy again. She had a child, but it died. Before its birth she met *him* again. He had settled in Rome. She was fool enough to believe that at least a friendship might be between them. He told her—and perhaps it was true—that he was ashamed of his past; that he was going to devote himself absolutely to his art; that he had great dreams and high hopes; that his manhood was to redeem his youth.

“But the end was just the same: of course. His passion was born anew. He said that it had never perished, but he lied. And she—what would you? She had never loved any one else. After a time her husband grew suspicious of his sculptor-friend. He waited his opportunity; and found it. Then there was a duel. But before this”—when she had gone thus far, Lucrezia abruptly stopped. I knew quite well now what she was about to say, but I waited.

“But before this happened, Ilse Jaromar”—

(and though her voice was like the hissing of a serpent, it seemed to me to resound deafeningly from every nook and corner)—“before this, *he* found that he could again treat Lucrezia Mallerini with insult and neglect and mockery and even brutality; and why? *Because you had come in his way.* I stood between you and him, therefore I had to suffer, and now you, who have in mind and word at least betrayed your husband, what are *you* going to do? Is it to be Venice or Paris over again?”

But enough, Odo. I have forced myself to write every burning word thus far, but now I may spare myself—and you. I did not doubt for a moment. I knew it to be true. The letters she thrust into my hands I read mechanically yet understandingly; shameful, selfish, horrible letters. There was one—not to Lucrezia, but to that other woman: I don't know why it came to be there:—she was an artist too, I saw—wherein he used the same words of love, urged almost the same pleas, as he had done with me.

I grew sick with the horror of it all. Perhaps it is that women of the North are different from those of the South; but I could not unbend or give way either to my shame, or agony of sorrow swallowed up in passionate indignation. I said to her simply that I did not love this man; that, before God, I would never speak with him again, not even look at him if it were in my power to avoid even that degradation. She believed me. She burst into a passion of tears. I could not have wept one tear though my soul's redemption had depended thereon. But at last she rose. Before she said farewell—for we shall never see each other again, never, *never*—she asked me when and where he and I had arranged to meet that evening. I told her. It was under the shadow of the ilex avenue, beyond that hateful Accademia Fontana with its treacherous whispering music. “And you will not go?” were her last words.

And now, Odo Jaromar—Odo, my best friend—Odo, who have given me your honour,

that I might slur it; your name, that I might shame it; your trust, that I might shatter it; here now all is at an end between us.

It would have been simpler to have sent you, as I at first wrote, the briefest line, but *I could not*, coward though I was and am. Perhaps another woman would have sent for you, told you something or all, and thrown herself upon your forgiveness! As you well know, the Ilse whom you once loved is not such a woman.

I give you back your name. I have never been worthy of it. Now, I would not bear it though you were dead and it were mine whether I would or not.

I shall be here a little time yet, for I am not well. Then I shall go away, to England, I think. No one shall know my name or whereabouts except my father. It is the one thing I ask of you, do not let him know *all*.

And so, now, all is at an end. Our hopes—but no, there is no “ours” for me any more. You

called me—not long ago, though God knows how long ago it seems to me now—a child, a foolish girl. There is no longer any girlhood in the broken-hearted woman who writes this letter to you.

And so, once more, good-bye. Perhaps you will think it only too characteristic of me when you see that my last wish is—not for you, the noblest and truest man I have ever known or shall know, but for those with whom I have sinned—that further evil and misery may not come out of this thing. More I cannot suffer, for the agony is not of the body.

After all, let my last wish be for you. There is one near you, a bright, beautiful, and pure life. Is it not a worthier one for you than ever mine could have been?

I am very tired.

ILSE VON ILSSENSTEIN.

XXIV.

From the Count to the Countess von Jaromar.

SCHLOSS JAROMAR,

January 29.

Ilse, my poor Ilse, do you think I am not near you in your wretchedness? Do you think I do not know? Do you for an instant suppose that your pitiful last letter can be a revelation—that I have been silent all this time because cheerfully occupied with riding and smoking and reading and improving my farmers' and fishermen's minds with lectures and stereoscopic views? Can you believe that I left you to your fate like a little rudderless boat in an angry sea? Dear heart—no, I have not done that. I was stupid and unconscious too long, and afterwards I may have acted like a fool or a madman, but I did not desert you, even when I believed the worst. I was there. I came to you. I saw, heard, and understood for myself. I spoke face to face with

that man, I did what I could. And when all was over, when I had satisfied myself that you were safe, then, although I had come so far, wounded to the death, believing I had lost you, mad for one word or look from you, though it were the last, not knowing what was still possible, but vaguely bent upon rescuing you, if not for me at least for yourself; and although I saw you, Ilse, stood in the shadow opposite your palace and watched you sitting motionless and desolate at your high window, and my heart was torn with longing and pity and love, still I could not, I would not come to you. It is incredible, but something hard and implacable rose within me, a stubborn resentment for the suffering of months crowned by the torture of the final week. "Let her come to me if she wants me," I thought. "Let her seek me. *Now* it is her turn!" And because I felt impelled to emerge from that black shadow, swiftly cross the dusky street and little distance between us, run up your palace stairway

two steps at a time, enter softly without knocking, find you in your sadness and self-reproach, take you silently in my arms, and, without a word, let you feel that I comprehended, that no explanations were needed, that I loved you, and that we two together would brave all old and haunting memories, all pitfalls of time and fate in the future, and find strength and peace in our alliance; that one could not abandon the other whatever came; because I felt all this, and more, a thousand times more, overpowering me like a hurricane, I turned and fled as if demons were pursuing. I got my things together, barely reached the late express, rolled myself in my rug in a corner of the carriage, glared like a demented person at all intruders, and it was only after I had been steaming northward for hours, that I came to my senses. Then I saw what a brute I had been. My heart melted like wax, and every instant, like a lost paradise, I saw that sweet, dark, still shape at the window—an in-

nocent and ardent woman in her remorse and self-abasement, whom I might perhaps have comforted and would not comfort, being stubborn and relentless. Be satisfied, I have atoned for it. I have suffered torments ever since for my lost chance. To think that I left my poor little Ilse alone, mourning for her broken idols!

But you will not understand. I must try to tell you the whole story. First, one word in reply to this heart-broken gallant letter of yours. Not in years can I answer it fully. My life shall be my real response. See, Ilse; it was detestable of me to be in Rome without going to you, but it was this that I craved, this that has come; a turning to me after evil days—a cry from your heart after your long indifference, the proof that you wanted and needed me; that was all, never mind in what words you put it, never mind what led to it. I was ready to die for you, but I could sue no longer for your love. Forgive me, Ilse. Some day you will better understand the heart of

a man, and what a hot, pained, angry thing mine was that night, with a dumb sense of deadly outrage too, although never think you were to blame for that—you could not have helped—but we will speak of that later.

To-night, as I look back, it is all like a wild dream; the rapid journey, the cities flying past, the excitement, misery, doubt, the shadowy Roman streets by night, and since my return the strain and suspense of waiting here—my soul's weal and woe in the balance—for your first word, which should show me whether your instinctive movement was towards me or away from me for ever. All that went before was child's play compared to this. Here was the crisis, the trembling, crucial moment, in which our day should dawn or sink into gloom. For if you had really loved him—but this can wait.

You turned to me, to me alone, in your bitterest grief. You stretched your hands towards me with the old trust, and now it is still and

solemn in my heart after the tumult. It is still here in my study. I hear the slow waves falling with a kind of muffled thud on the strand. I can begin to think like a sane man, and to remember the sequence of things, now that your letter has come and the heavens are opened.

It was the Rhodope letter that broke me down utterly. For weeks I had been struggling hard. It was bad enough from the first. There has not been a day since we parted that I have not had to hold myself with a powerful grip, like Baldur when he droops his head, takes the bit in his teeth and wants to run—lest I should break away in spite of myself and plunge off wildly to Rome. Ah, Ilse, the theories are all good, the rights are incontrovertible, the old system was bondage and degradation, the new promises help and growth to humanity—but what a man loves he wants near, and when he longs to clasp his wife in his arms, he cannot still his heart-hunger with philosophy.

It was a prolonged purgatory. Telling myself you would tire of it sooner or later, I determined to hold out. I worked and hoped to gain strength Antaeus-like from the touch of mother earth, but my Jaromar soil and its interests could not appease my wild longing for that distant land where my love was radiantly happy without me. O Ilse, you do not understand, no woman can understand, but there have been devils in me. Never mind, that is past.

How often have I pictured arriving in Rome, thought out in detail all the results, and resolved, cost me what it would, not to take this false step. For I knew too well that if I should suddenly appear, you would be all that was friendly, sunny, sweet and charming, if a little astonished, and a trifle inconvenienced, and that after a couple of days, I should become a positive nuisance, since nothing could prevail against your enthusiasm for art, and your indifference toward me and all else. Besides, Ilse, at first for months indeed, in spite

of your frank interest in Herwegh, I did not believe you loved him. I took him simply as another odious phase of the many-sided art-cult that was continually separating us, something to be temporarily endured like the rest. Not even your disclosures from Villa Mallerini (which you treated with amazing lightness, significant as they were) let me perceive that your interest in this man was other than—but we shall have time for such things later.

Nevertheless with the villa letters, my fever of impatience and disgust mounted beyond endurance. It is easy to say now that I ought to have known. But the fact is I did not know. You see, Ilse, I was accustomed to think of you as invulnerable so far as love is concerned, and far away from love's inquietude: not cold, oh no, but—unawakened. Never mind that now. I will tell you later what I thought.

Then like a thunderbolt descended upon me the Rhodope fable, which you related with mad-

dening coolness and simplicity—child, child, how could you? It scattered my resolutions to the winds, opened my dull eyes, showed me with one flash what was yawning before you, while I, fatuous man with theories and principles, was more than two thousand miles away.

Then at least I lost no time, not an instant; as quickly as was humanly possible I lessened that appalling distance between Jaromar and Rome. But the trains crept like snails, and I was consumed with helpless rage and the worst forebodings. Ah, those nights rattling on miserably, the very jar and rumble of the machinery grinding out “Rhodope! Rhodope! Rhodope!” while in brief moments of broken sleep, Rhodope, Phaon, Helicon and Paris, were mingled in a delirious jumble, and statues of men with snakes’ heads reached out marble arms to seize a fair-haired child running on the wind-swept dunes of Jaromar.

Well, I got there at last. I sent my things to

a hotel and went straight to you. I had no plans, no more theories. My whole being had concentrated itself in one fiery instinct to take you in my arms and carry you off, out of danger, away from the enemy, your enemy, my enemy, and to crush anything that got in my way.

I found the Palazzo Malaspina easily, remembering the streets well. I went up to your rooms, my heart beating with mighty throbs. The door was ajar, I walked in. There in that tranquil room, full of you, breathing you, fragrant of you, I think I must have partly recovered my senses.

It was all dusky and sweet. There was a tall standing lamp with a great white shade. There were books, and over a chair hung something soft and white,—a scarf or shawl. There were roses everywhere. All my violence was gone. "Ilse!" I said quite timidly, imploringly. No answer. I went on. There was another room, smaller—quite white—stiller. A lamp with a

deep red flame hung on silver chains high in the corner before a clear-cut marble face.

O Ilse, Ilse, if you could understand! It was like coming from hot hell into a shrine. It is stupid and hopeless to try to put such things into words, most of all for me, for I am never fluent. But perhaps I can show you a faint shadow of what moved me. I saw the things that meant you. I breathed your atmosphere. I had come so far, so feverishly, so full of passion and revenge. Here all was still and chaste. I knew it was like you, like your inner self. I don't know what I did. I wept hot tears on your pillow. I kissed all the silver and ivory things on your dressing-table. I breathed all those indefinable odours floating like tender memories about me. Oh, I loved you so, and in one sense I had never come so near you. There were some loose faded violets on the table by your bed, and a tiny green morocco "Imitation" with an odd volume of Heine and one little tan-coloured glove, impatiently pulled

off wrong side out. I waited ten—fifteen minutes, half an hour; you did not come. I paced your small serene domain and devoured everything with my hungry gaze. It is no use to try to tell you how it was with me, the memories, the fears, the hopes that would not die,—and still you did not come. Then I started out to find you, by no means calm and reasonable, but immeasurably civilized by the eloquent loveliness of your white nest.

Even in my agitation I remembered your jesting words about the daring lover and the two entrances: I too came by one entrance and went by the other. I thought you were at Herwegh's among the tall white forms which Vanni hated and I with him. I loved that splendid boy in your letter. It seemed to me he was the one healthy unspoiled soul you had met in Rome. I asked a chance somebody on the street where Herwegh's study was. The man knew, and even went amiably out of his way to guide me, telling

tales to my unheeding ears of a wonderful newly discovered tenor. I came to the place. Again I was frustrated and cooled. Everything was different from what I had anticipated. He was not there, you were not there. There was only a low light among the silent shapes; and a dark, beautiful boy with wide-open eyes came forward to meet me.

"Where is the sculptor Herwegh?" I demanded.

He stared at me long.

"Don't you like him?" he said at length.

"No," I muttered. It was a strange boy, but what else could I say?

"Then I will show you," he said gravely. "I hate him too."

"You are Vanni?"

"Yes, I am Vanni, and I hate him."

"Where is the lady?" I stammered.

"There are several ladies," said the boy thoughtfully. "Do you mean the beautiful white lady that smiles?"

"Yes, yes, that is the one I mean."

"Well, I don't know," he deliberated, "there are so many, the white lady, and the little red-haired one, and the other with the wide mouth, and the one that sings, and the fierce, sad lady that wants him all the time; but it is under the ilexes that he and the white lady often walk. Wait, I will show you; come." Locking some doors, he slipped his hand confidingly in mine, and we walked on.

He liked me instinctively you see, and I him, I suppose because we were both savages at heart: at last he whispered, "There they are!" and left me.

A man, with a woman leaning on his arm, was passing slowly up and down. I stood motionless against a tree, watched, listened. She was tall and closely veiled, I could not see her outlines, for she wore some sort of long loose black garment. Nothing told me that it was you.

The man's voice was ironically good-humoured.

He was explaining, soothing, promising—lying, I would have sworn, although hearing at first no word.

They came nearer. The woman gave one passionate sob.

“*Non è vero, non è vero!*” she exclaimed, and her first tone released me from torture. Thank God, it was not your voice. It was not my Ilse, humbled, dragged down from her high estate, the plaything of a careless man.

I listened deliberately, greedily bent upon knowing what things meant, where you were, and what relation it all had with you. Once when a boy I was an eavesdropper, at first involuntarily, then curious because my father was speaking of me, I listened intentionally some minutes, and hated and despised myself for it afterwards, and was bitterly ashamed of my meanness. But this was different. I had no scruples, and I am not now ashamed.

I heard your name repeatedly, at first with

nameless fear, but gradually I grew quieted, for not once did they speak lightly of you, although you were the central point of this dusky rendezvous. She knew that he was lying, yet she let herself be persuaded. She was so weary, so infatuated that she felt grateful for their hollow, fragile reconciliation. Poor woman! I did not like the Mallerini in your letters. I regarded her as a stagey, obnoxious sort of person, and she is in truth rather torrid and melodramatic. But nevertheless she turns to him with most miserable doglike faithfulness, and that I understand. Although she knows him down to the core, although he has outraged her faith and trailed her ideals in the dust, she loves him; and for her misfortune, for her pure affection amid impure chances, for the strong human-heart-note in her misery I pitied her so vastly, Ilse, I would have done anything to serve her. For a moment I even forgot you and me, it was so sad a thing to hear her.

She implored him to go away at once.

"Cesare," she said, "was terrible." Sometimes she was afraid he would kill her and she did not want to die. Or there would be a horrible scandal, Cesare would divorce her if he could obtain one positive proof. Since the duel he had set detectives after her. Divorce would be a blessed release, only she knew Herwegh would abandon her if she trusted him, as he did before in Venice, and she sobbed and moaned and told him how miserable she was, until he grew vastly bored.

"Haven't we had theatre enough?" he asked. "Besides you know this has not the charm of novelty for either of us."

Thereupon she retorted angrily and assured him that whatever came he had lost you; you would never see him again. You had sworn it. She reported the conversation between you practically as it stands in your letter. You cared nothing for him, she declared. You did not know how to love, you were too cold. You were only

a sentimental German in love with carving and yourself.

"There's method in your madness, my poor Lucrezia," Herwegh returned with a slight laugh.

Then she relented, begged him to forgive her, but to go away, to go that very night. Things were too strained, she could not bear it any longer. Only gain time, avert Cesare's suspicions, and later all would be well again.

"But my dear child, you know very well that I am going to Paris soon in any event. Why this ungraceful haste?"

"To-night, ah! to-night," she pleaded, "Cesare is in a horrible mood."

"You are far more afraid of the Countess von Jaromar than of Cesare, yet you say she will never look at me again."

"To-night, Friedrich, for my sake to-night," was her one reply.

"Well," he deliberated, "upon the whole, I will think of it. It might save a little awkward-

ness, and one day is as good as another to them that love the Lord."

"Oh, thanks," she sobbed, "do you promise?"

"Promise! Promise!" he repeated incredulously. "O indestructible trustfulness of womankind! She still has faith in my promise. Lucrezia, for this sublime weakness you shall be rewarded." Looking at his watch—"If Vanni is still at the studio, and he is, unless he has run away, which sometimes happens when I tell him to sleep there, and if I can send him in various directions and get ready in time—for really I cannot sail off on a cloud like Jove without any shirts—I will leave for Paris to-night."

The poor thing thanked him with passionate gratitude as if he had undertaken some heroic deed for her, clung to him wildly, and they parted.

She stood alone, tottered, leaned against the wall. I was on the point of following Herwegh, but I could not leave her like that, I went to her.

"Signora," I said, "I am Odo, Count Jaromar. You seem ill, command me."

She started and stared at me under the gas lamp.

"Yes, I am ill," she muttered, "very ill."

"Can't I get a carriage for you?" I suggested.

She leaned her head against the wall and closed her eyes.

I waited—silent, hearing the monotonous plash of the fountain, remembering you had listened to it there with him, and realizing you too had done this woman a wrong and added to her pain.

Presently she said:

"Were you here all the time?"

"Yes."

"And heard?"

"Everything."

"I thought it," she murmured. "I thought I saw a man's figure. But I am so nervous, I am afraid of shadows. I always see spies and listeners

where there are none.—I am not sorry that you heard, now she will believe doubly.”

“If I cannot get a carriage for you, or be of any service, I will leave you now,” I returned formally.

“You can do me a service, a great service, will you?”

“If in my power.”

“Take me home, into my husband’s house,” she proposed impetuously.

“I shall be glad to do that.”

“Give me your arm, let us go,” she said with strange animation.

I hesitated.

“It is not too far? I must see Signor Herwegh to-night.”

“You will not hurt him,” she cried.

“Why should I?” I said coldly. “I have no cause.”

“True,” she sighed. After a moment, “Yes,

you will have time. It is not yet nine, he goes after eleven."

We went on in silence. I stopped a carriage, and we drove to her house. I wondered every instant where you were, if she knew, but I could not speak your name.

A carriage followed us closely. She glanced back nervously now and then.

At her door I turned to go.

"One instant," she murmured—"for Heaven's sake!" then in a clear, penetrating voice, as somebody got out of the second carriage:

"I must really insist upon your coming in a moment, my dear count. My husband would be inconsolable."

I followed her. "Why not let her have her way?" I thought. Everybody is against her. If anything I can do can help, she is welcome to it. I saw the moody Cesare. He was pointedly courteous. His smiling wife chattered unceasingly about you, your beauty, your talent, your sym-

pathetic qualities, how she had enjoyed her long talk with you, how charmed she was to find me there, how good I was to bring her home. We two men listened gravely, and believed, I presume, one about as much as the other. Still my presence was a tangible reality, which Count Malerini could not deny.

I may have remained five or six minutes, not longer. Then I drove to Herwegh's studio. Don't ask me what my intentions were, for I don't know. I had to see him, and I was seeking you. I don't know why I did anything that night, but nothing seemed to me at the time strange or unnatural.

Vanni opened the door and smiled as if he loved me.

Herwegh was sitting at a writing-table strewn with papers. A bright light shone upon him, the rest of the long room was dim, the corners black. I saw the white shapes, and thought, "She loved it here, I will try not to hate it."

"Well," said Herwegh, turning impatiently, "what is it now, Vanni? I told you to have those things sent to my hotel."

Perceiving me, he gave me a quick, keen look, and came forward courteously with:

"Whom have I the honour?"

I gave my name.

"I presumed as much," he returned affably, "I recognized you from the little bust on the countess' desk. I am very glad to meet you. May I offer you an arm-chair, and a cigar? Vanni, bring a bottle of Frascati."

I said nothing, I only looked fixedly at him. In my heart were a score of emotions in hot conflict, but ruling them all, a distinct impression that I must be cool or I should harm you. I presume I looked as I felt, hostile, for presently he said with a smile:

"Have you come all the way from the Baltic to shoot me? Because—Vanni, a candle on

that upper shelf." Taking a small revolver from the table, he aimed with a negligent air and shot off the pointed tip of a plaster faun's right ear. This was stupid bravado; but I confess it angered me.

"I have not," I returned icily; "but—allow me," and taking the revolver from his hand, I shot off the corresponding left ear-tip.

"*A la bonne heure!*" he exclaimed smiling. "What can I do for you?"

"For me, nothing."

"For my fair pupil, the Countess Ilse, then?"

"For her still less."

He frowned.

"Then since you come neither in war nor in peace, may I enquire what in the devil do you want?"

"Merely to accentuate the request of the Countess Mallerini that you leave Rome to-night," I replied on the impulse of the moment.

He regarded me with extreme surprise.

"Upon my word," he began, "you know the Mallerinis already?"

"I come from their house."

"But you have just arrived?"

"Yes."

He surveyed me some moments with an amused, puzzled expression.

"You have evidently come to remain," he remarked reflectively. To this I made no reply.

"It is amazing. Why *you* should appear as special pleader for—for the other woman is what causes my confusion of ideas," he went on with unfeigned amusement.

"*Sapperment!* it is as good as a vaudeville. But I will go. My friends in Rome don't want me, my friends in Paris do. Perhaps you will come to the train and see me off?" he asked ironically.

"I should like nothing better."

At this he laughed.

"Do you know, as an accent you are a success," he said, "you are impressive."

"What is the price of that bust?" I demanded. It was you, Ilse—the plaster Rhodope.

"You speak as if it were a pair of shoes, my young Goth," he answered amiably. "That bust is not for sale, but if you will accept it at my hands—"

I stood looking at it fiercely, helplessly longing to destroy it, not trusting myself to speak.

Herwegh watched me for several moments. Suddenly he flung the lovely likeness on the floor. It lay at our feet in fragments.

"Will you accept it now?" he said quietly.

"I thank you," I answered.

"See," he returned, "it is always better not to take things tragically. For the rest, the Countess Jaromar is a lovely, a singularly innocent and enthusiastic woman, a true artist-nature whom I—"

"You will lose your train," I interrupted.

"No, I still have time. I must be fifteen years older than you—take my advice and—"

"I don't want it, I have no need of it," I broke out hotly.

"Perhaps you are right," he returned imperturbably. "Every man must stultify himself in his own fashion. You in yours, I in mine. It is an unlucky chance that we meet thus," he went on, "I should have greatly liked to know you better. You suggest half a dozen things I want to do, do you know. I shall not forget you, and I have to thank you for a particularly fresh experience this evening."

I asked where and when his train would leave, and turned to go.

"One word," he said hastily, "a droll idea just occurs to me. You do not suspect me, I hope, of anything resembling fear of consequences?"

"No man could think that of you," I answered with conviction.

"That is right," he said cheerfully. "Give the devil his due. I am not over-sensitive as to the bauble, reputation, but I confess I don't understand jests in regard to my personal courage. *Au revoir*, then, since you will not stay, and since I have a couple of letters still to write."

I was sorry to say good-bye to Vanni. He looked at me wistfully. He was disappointed that nothing had happened. It seemed to him a very small performance for so tall and strong a man who hated Herwegh. I presume it was. Yet I cannot see that anybody's gore, Herwegh's or mine, would have helped matters.

I hastened back to the Palazzo Malaspina. There was now no light in your windows. I could not explain this, but waited, watched, until it was time to go to the train.

I saw Herwegh leave. He waved his hand and nodded in debonair fashion from the window, and went off apparently with a tranquil conscience. It was very commonplace, yet all the elements of

tragedy were there as they always are everywhere.

This is the history of my evening in Rome when I came to see only you, and fate led me to all these others and not to you. You know the rest, how I went again to seek you, and—turned and fled. Your long letter has reached me to-day. And now trust me. Come. Telegraph where I shall meet you. Think only that your old friend longs to comfort you. When we are calmer, after a long time—we will speak of all these things. We will help each other. There is no other life near me but your own, none that wants me, none that I want—only you. Come to me, trust me, Ilse, beloved wife.

XXV.

*From Mademoiselle Marguerite Borike to the
Countess Ilse von Jaromar.*

SCHLOSS JAROMAR,
February 2.

MADAME,

Although Count Odo answered quite heartily, "Of course, of course, child," when I asked him this morning if I might venture to send one little word to meet you, I suspect he did not see me or hear a word I said, he was so glad, so glad! For it was the hour that he received the good tidings, and his eyes were flashing, and his face looked as I never saw it, and he was giving orders to everybody at once, and holding the telegram tight in his hand wherever he went, and so eager to be off I could not disturb him again. For there was indeed little time to catch the train, and presently he mounted Baldur and rode away like the wind, and Ete galloping be-

hind on Puck with the valise, could scarcely keep him in sight—even down the beech avenue.

Yet, madame, I hope it is not unfitting that the strange young girl whom you will find in your house should long to lay her *hommages* and her whole heart at your feet. For she has dared to love you from afar, she thanks Count Odo and you every hour of her life for the loveliest and most precious gift on earth—a home, and she has prayed unceasingly to the blessed Sainte Marguerite to give you courage during the long and sorrowful time of your absence, and to restore you safe to your dear ones.

It is beautiful, madame, to be like you—to come like the sunshine bringing sweetness and joy. Sorrow came with me, yet I found such pity, such angel-goodness here, that I wonder if heaven itself can be kinder than this kind world. And if people are so good to me, what must they be to you? Every morning when I have brought

fresh flowers to your beautiful picture, I have remembered this.

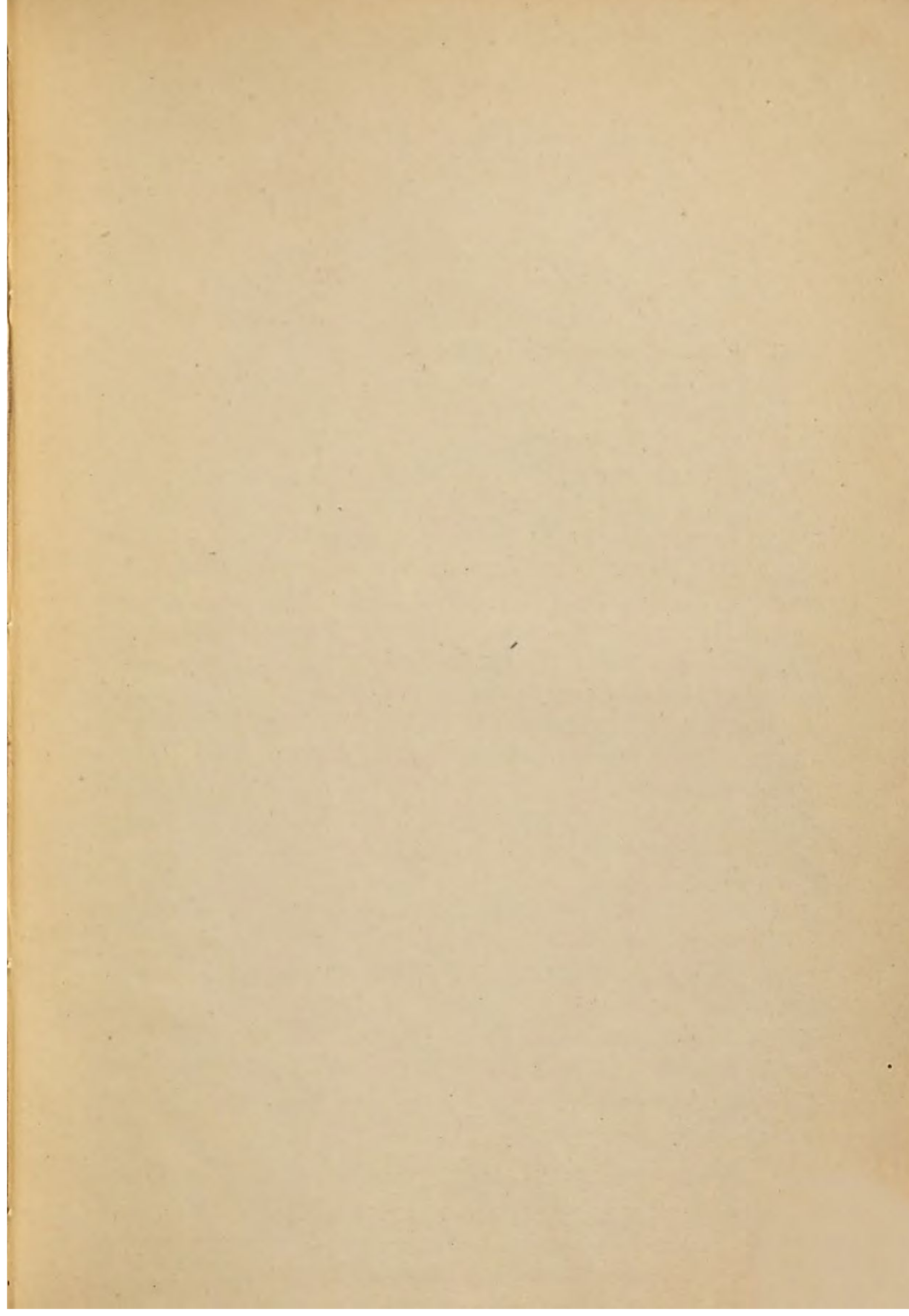
Ah, madame, I cannot wait for your home-coming, for the banners, and bells, and flowers, for the smiles and happy tears, and most of all for the great joy in Count Odo's face. It is good to see him glad, when one has always known him sorrowful and lonely behind all the happiness that he gives others. It is beautiful to be the one who alone can give him happiness, to be great and good and wise like you, and to be able to stand beside Count Odo.

Pardon me, madame, that I do not know how to say it better, my deep, deep devotion, my tender thoughts, my gladness,—but since I, in the whole multitude of loving waiting ones, have most reason to love and bless you both, I would if I could make my welcome ring out above all the rest, like one little joy-bell from the loving heart of

MARGOT,

THE END.

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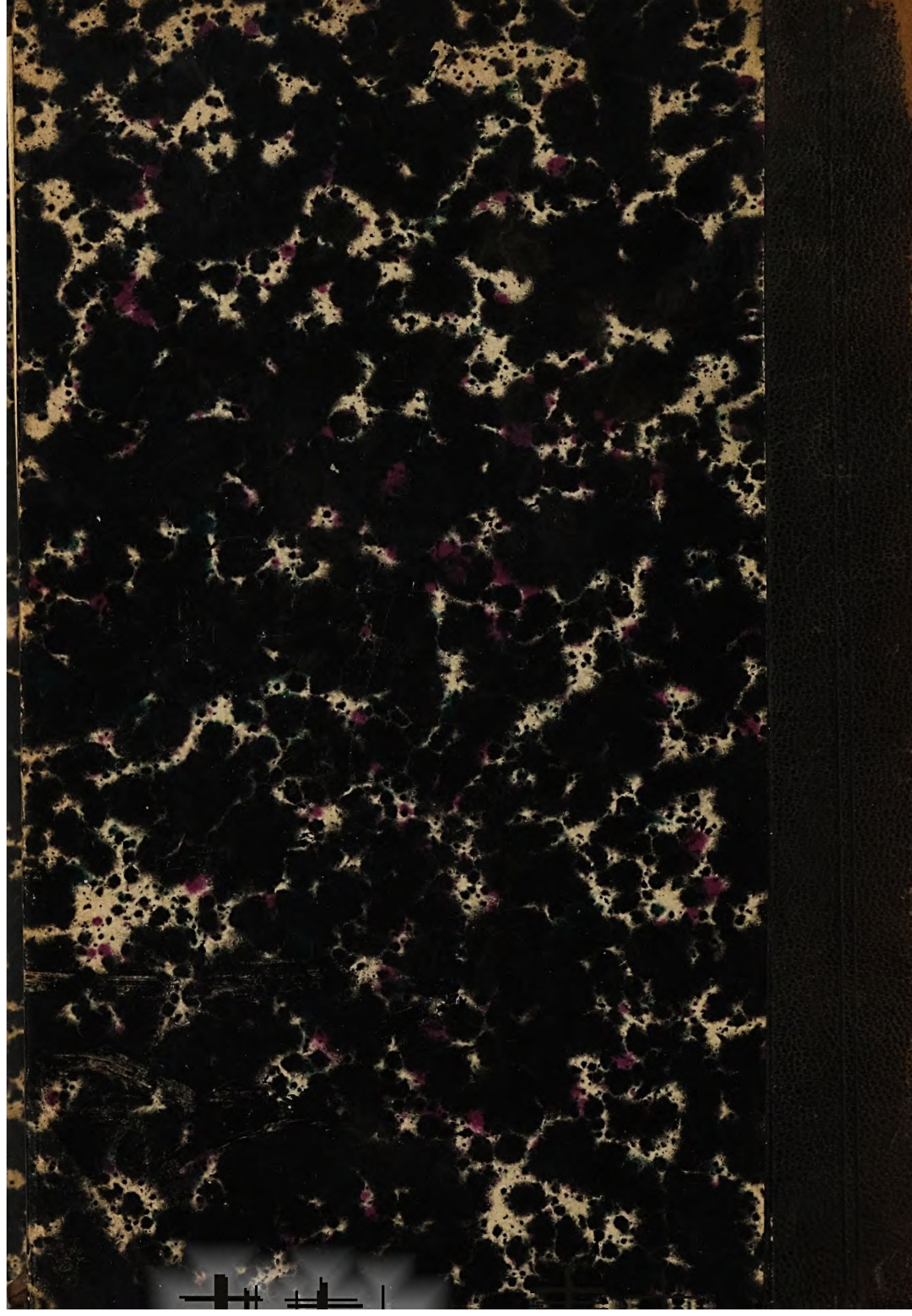
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